# THE LITERARY VALUE OF TIRUVĀYMOḺI

Dr. G. DAMODARAN

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SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY
TIRUPATI-2

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# THE LITERARY VALUE OF TIRUVĀYMOL̲I

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With a Foreword
By

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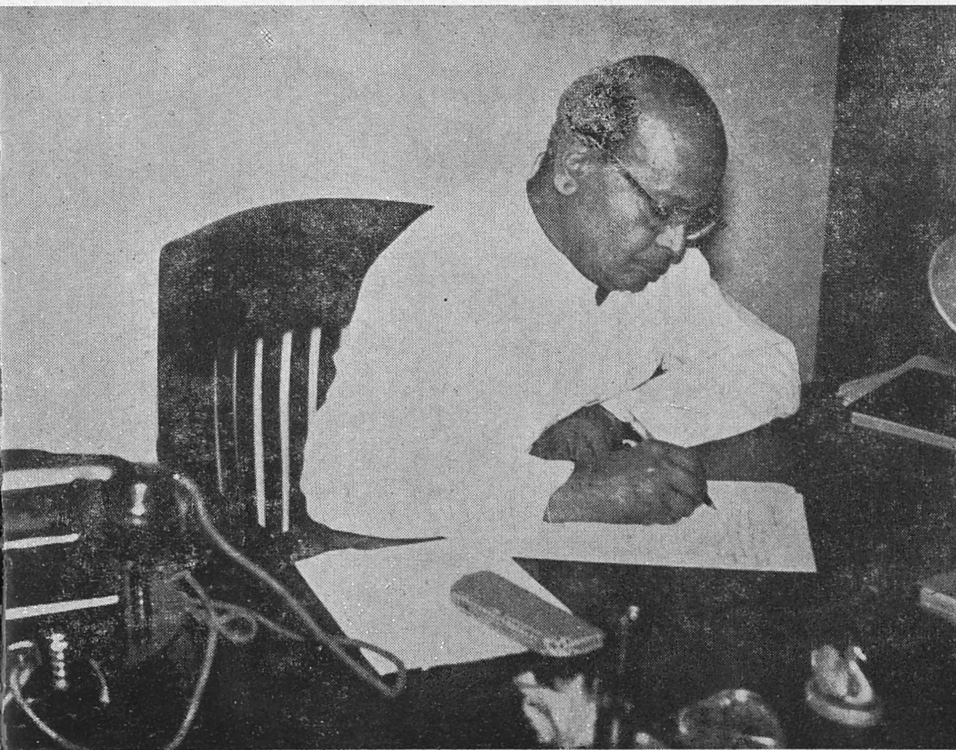

**Tiru T. S. AVINASHILINGAM**

*My Beloved Ayya*

# FOREWORD

By insisting that, notwithstanding my ignorance, I should write a Foreword to his study of *Tiruvaymoli* as a corpus of great poetry, Dr. G. Damodaran has compelled me to embark on a bit of self-education, or re-education. In the days of my childhood and boyhood, my house used to rumble with the rhythms of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* ('The Beatific Four Thousand') for my paternal grandmother knew all 4000 by heart, and my own parents at least 1000. Every day in the temple the rhythmic - mantric - impact went on, mingling in what Carl Jung calls the "collective unconscious" of the race. In my tenth year, I first visited Alwartirunagari, and made a bee-line to the sacred Tamarind Tree. With my eyes of faith, I saw him - Maran, Nammalvar! - There. I could visualise the mythic scene, the elderly Madhurakavi asking the 'dumb' boy:

> When atom incorruption the soul)
> is born in corruption (matter)
> What will the little one feed on,
> and where will it find refuge? -

and receiving the strident answer:

> It will subsist on That (the Divine)
> and there find refuge.

I saw too the idol of Nammalvar in the temple, and Adinatha the local Deity. The place seemed to my boyish consciousness filled with an unearthly or Divine Presence. Sixty years after, how can my mere cerebration - or critical sensibility - take the measure of those childhood experiences?

Nammalvar indited in the course of a few years *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvasirium*, *Peria Tiruvanthathi* and *Tiruvaymoli*, and it is said that these contain the very quintessence of the four Vedas. Nammalvar was the God-intoxicated Bhakta, he was the God-illumined Jnani; and he was also the Guru-Paraclete leading puzzled and errant humanity to the Lord. And Nammalvar's *Tiruvaymoli* is the poetry of this God love and this God-knowledge, and stimulates in the reader or listener both *rasanubhava* and *Brahmanubhava*. "Bhakti, the rounded fullness of Jnana and peerless Tamil fuse in Nammalvar's verses", says Rajaji concluding his *Bhakti-Neri*. And Sri Aurobindo remarks that, in his *Tiruvaymoli*, Nammalvar "Has touched all the phases of the life divine and given expression to all forms of spiritual experience. The pure and passionate Reason, the direct perception in the high solar realm of Truth itself, the ecstatic and sometimes poignant love that leaps into being at the vision of the 'Beauty of God's face', the final Triumph where unity is achieved and 'I and my Father are one', all these are uttered in his simple and flowing lines with a strength that is full of tenderness and truth".

It is not easy - perhasps it is not wise - to try to dissociate essentially indifferentiable things: the poetry, the experience behind it and the philosophy consumed in them. With a poet-mystic like Nammalvar, the poetry *is* the experience as well as the philosophy flowing from it and also informing it.

In his time and later, Nammalvar came to be looked upon as the Pole Star of Vaishnavism, the shining centre of the Alvar galaxy. While Nathamuni arranged of the chanting of the Beatific Four Thousand in the Vaishnava temples, Ramanuja sustained his Visishtadvaita thesis as much by a refutation of Sankara on his own Sanskritic ground as by an appeal to Nammalvar's insights and

illuminations. Visishtadvaita has thus become the Ubaya Vedanta, receiving equal inspiration from the Sanskrit scriptures (the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Gita) and the Beatific Four Thousand of the Alvars, and in fact some of the Vaishnava and Visishtadvaita classics are in Manipravala, a creative mingling or coalesing of Tamil and Sanskrit Notable among these are Vedanta Desika's *Rahasya-Traya-Sara* and Alakiamanavalars *Acharya Hrdaya*.

Dr. Damodaran, who has already published a valuable critical study of *Acharya Hrdayam*, which is an exposition of the bridal mysticism, philosophical content and the revolutionary social stance of *Tiruvaymoli*, has now turned to a systematic analysis of the "literary excellences of this unique Tamil classic". Nammalvar the mystic-seer, the God-lover, the seraphic saint, was also a supreme poet, and it is the poet - the poet in excelsis - that is Dr. Damodaran's principal preoccupation in the present work. I have said already that the attempt to separate the mystic and philosophical content from the poetic form and style is difficult and can be misleading. But holding the view that *Tiruvaymoli* both offers "an insight into the spiritual progress of the Alvar" and moves us as "sublime poetry", Dr. Damodaran is nothing daunted by the enterprise. After two informative chapters on Nammalvar's life and pilgrimages and his thought and teachings and on his views on the Nature and Function of Poetry, Dr. Damodaran devotes individual chapters to Nammalvar's lyrics on God-Love, the characteristic features of his narrative art and Poetic style, his distinctive figures of speech, his delineation of Nature, his prosodic mastery and resilience, and his use of Puranic stories; and he concludes with contrastive studies covering some of the major poets from Tolkappiyar to Manikkavasagar.

Nammalvar seems to have lived what might be called a life of allegory. His real or inner life was much larger

than his visible almost 'uneventful' life. He praised God, not man; and he was eaten up with God-Love, not the love mundane; and all his songs were an offering to the Divine. Dr. Damodaran substantiates the the view that this God-Love too comes within the scope of Akappurol. Sometimes Nammalvar speaks directly, and sometimes – with dramatic and psychological appositeness – he assumes the role of *nayaki* (bride), her confidant, or her mother. In the poetry of the Love Divine, the ardent aspiring human soul abandons earthly cares and preoccupations, and surrenders to the one overwhelming desire for uninon with the Lord, and passes through divers stages – the intuition of intimacy, the pangs of separation, the sense of longing, the stab of misery and the final unitive experience. Dr. Damodaran's considered view is that the 27 decades in *Tiruvaymoli* that are tuned to these inner vicissitudes are right in the Ahapporul tradition, though of course with a significant difference dictated by the shift in sensibility from the human to the Divine.

In the subsequent chapters, Dr. Damodaran exploits the tools of analysis, comparison and contrast to good purpose, cites liberally apt illustrative passages, and although one has the feeling now and then that so much dissection, so much categorisation, may let the poetic essence elude the critic's grasp, the aim is really to enhance poetic appreciation, and this is generally achieved. The definitive criterion, of course, is the power of the poetry to touch the sahrdaya's heart, to awaken the aspirant's soul, and in this Nammalvar scores again and again, and yet again. Image making and figures of speech are important, for these forge the filiations between Appearance and Reality, Here and Eternity, and such imagery and symbolism can be the warp and woof of the poetry of the Spirit. Dr. Damodaran is at pains to substantiate this with a plethora of citations. Understandably enough, many of Nammalvar's similies and

metaphors are drawn from Nature, for he was after all a child of Nature, not a monster of cerebration and sophistication; and Nammalvar is the laureate of a universe where man, God and Nature strive to attain the bliss of splendorous and harmonious togetherness and harmony. Likewise, Nammalvar's uncannily purposive use of Puranic myth and symbol and his choice of metre to suit the mood of the moment charge *Tiruvaymoli* with reverberations that reach up to the profounder listening of the soul. Dr. Damodaran's last chapter sets Nammalvar among the great Tamil poets, giving him a place that is centrally important in the hymnal tradition. Tirumoolar, Appar, Sundarar, Manikkavasagar, Nammalvar: they were all pilgrim-singers of Time and Eternity, of Time gathered into and transcended by Eternity, and comparisons and rankings would be out of place. Each had his own stance, and vision, and voice, and it is Everest here, and Everest there and there, in the sky-soaring Himalayan range of Tamil devotional and mystic poetry.

Dr. Damodaran deserves to be congratulated on his completing conscientiously so meritorious a research project. Here industry teams with sensitivity, and scholarship with a feeling for literary values; and not the least of the merits of this excellent study is its constant feat of referring the reader back to Nammalvar and to his imperishable spiritual and Poetic heritage, *Tiruvaymoli*.

'Matri Bhavan'
152, Kutchery Road
Mylapore, Madras
3 October 1978

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

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"Mani Bhavan"
152, Kutchery Road
Mylapore, Madras
October 1973

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

# PREFACE

It was the late T. M. Narayanaswamy Pillai, the great scholar and former Vice Chancellor of Annamalai University, who suggested in 1959 that I should work on Vaiṣṇava Religion and Literature. Later, Dr. T. P. Meenakshi Sundaranar, that doyen in the field of Tamil language and literature, encouraged me to carry further my investigation in this field. It is, therefore my duty to acknowledge how much I owe to both of them.

Vaiṣṇava Religion and Literature has since been of special interest to me and my work in this field has always given me a sense of fulfilment. In 1976, my "Critical Study of Ācārya Hṛdayam" was published by Tirumalai Tirupati Devastanams. The critical attention and response it received from many quarters have now prompted me to publish with the U. G. C. grant, my Ph. D. thesis titled "The Literary value of Tiruvōymoḻi" which was submitted to the Annamalai University in 1972. My thanks are due to the S. V. University authorities for making this grant available, and to the Annamalai University for permitting me to publish it.

It is well known that Bhakti literature – the work of many poets and religious seers – abounds in Tamil. But their mystical and soul-stirring poems have largely received religious interpretation; the great poetry they contain has not received the attention it richly deserves. I have felt it worthwhile to focus attention on the poetic powers of these saint-poets. In these pages, I attempt to assess the literary merits of the poems of Nammāḻvār, who is the supreme Ācārya of Vaiṣṇavites with special reference to his *magnum opus*, Tiruvāymoḻi.

Dr. V. Sp. Manikkam, then Professor and Head of the faculty of Indian Languages in Annamalai University was my guide. His dynamic and able guidance and sympathetic and scholarly outlook had helped me to a large extent in formulating this thesis in this form. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to him.

Professor K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, former Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University and one of the noted figures in English studies in India and abroad has graciously favoured me with a foreword at a very short notice. I acknowledge his kind gesture with warm and grateful thanks.

Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore where I had my school education is run on the principles of Vivekananda and Gandhiji. Its founder and director Tiru T. S. Avinashilingam who is a noted Educationist himself was our 'Ayya' or intellectural father to all of us there. I always enjoyed his affection and benefited much. I am happy to dedicate this humble work of mine as a token of my love and reverence to 'Ayya'.

I wish to take this opportunity here to thank my former colleague, Dr. S. N. Kandaswamy, Reader in Tamil, Annamalai University who kindly undertook to read the proofs and helped to bring this volume in a very short time. I also thank a host of others who have inspired me in one way or other in the preparation of this book. Special mention may be made here to Prof. R. Ramanujachari and Prof. J. Parthasarathy, retired Professors and Prof. V. Sethuraman, Professor of English, Autonomous P. G. Centre at Anantapur. I thank the Sivakami Printers, especially its proprietor Tiru P. Seran for undertaking this work as a service to Tamil rather than as a business for Profit.

Tirupati,<br>6-10-1978.

G. Damodaran

# THE SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

| *Vowels* | | *Consonants* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| a | அ | k | க் |
| ā | ஆ | ṅ | ங் |
| i | இ | c | ச் |
| ī | ஈ | ñ | ஞ் |
| u | உ | ṭ | ட் |
| ū | ஊ | ṇ | ண் |
| e | எ | t | த் |
| ē | ஏ | n̲ | ந் |
| ai | ஐ | p | ப் |
| o | ஒ | m | ம் |
| ō | ஓ | y | ய் |
| ou | ஔ | r | ர் |
| | | ḷ | ல் |
| | | v | வ் |
| | | l̲ | ழ் |
| | | ḷ | ள் |
| | | ṛ | ற் |
| | | n | ன் |

The transliteration scheme of the Tamil Lexicon has been adopted here with a slight modification in respect of dental and Alveolar nasals for the convenience of typing. Except in case of commonly used words the phonemic writing has been followed.

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# INTRODUCTION

Among the entire collection of Tamil classics, devotional literature holds an honoured place. Some scholars even speak of Tamil as a unique vehicle of love or devotion. "It cannot be forgotten", writes Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the reputed Educationist, statesman and administrator, "that in the matter of devotional literature, Tamil occupies a specially high position amongst the literatures of the world"[1]. The Vaiṣṇava and the Saiva saints known respectively as the Āḻvārs and the Nāyanmārs who composed the devotional verses which in their extent and excellence are entitled to the foremost place in Tamil literature, flourished in the period extending from the 6th to the 10th century A. D. By their exquisite Tamil Poems which are noted for their devotional appeal and musical cadence they kindled the religious sentiments of the people and caused religious devotion to spread like flood throughout the land. "These devotional songs have been aptly described as growing and ripening into wholesome fruits in the soil of bhakti of the Tamils fertilised by genuine religious feeling. During this period, religion and Tamil seemed so closely intertwined as inseparable."[2]

Devotional hymns were composed by spiritual stalwarts from time to time in moments of genuine religious feeling as decads of verses and not as systematic treatises. Later, during the reign of later Cōḻa kings, Tamil language got the necessary impetus and encouragement for vigorous growth. *Thirumuṟais* and *Divyaprabandas* were classified and arranged respectively by Nampiāṇṭār Nampi and Nātamuni. It is the unbiased opinion of the author of 'The Story of

Tamil Research.' "If a computation is made of the musical verses in tha whole range of Tamil literature, it would be found that the *Divyaprabandas* constitute a third; the *Tirumuṟais* form another third and other Tamil compositions would be the remaining third"[3]. The literary merits of the former namely, the Divyaprabandas have not been sufficiently understood and appreciated though some attempts have been made to expound their philosophical teachings. This thesis is undertaken with the main aim of focussing attention on the literary beauties hidden in Tiruvāymoḷi the foremost among the prabandas.

The hymns of the Āḷvārs and the songs of the Saiva religious saints (Saiva Samaya Kuravar) were composed more or less in the same period. Hence it is but natural that they exhibit some common features. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the commonly used expression "the songs of the Nāyanmārs" is incorrect; for out of the sixty three Nāyanmārs only seven composed devotional songs; while all the Āḷvārs have been authors of hymns Hence for the sake of precision and to obviate possible confusion, it would be best to speak of them as songs composed by the Saiva religious preceptors. In extent, the compositions of the Āḷvars are much less than those of the saiva saints.

*Divyaprabanda* consists of four thousand stanzas, as is indicated in the alternative name *Nālāyira divyaprabanda* (The Four thousand Divine collect). Of these, the compositions of Nammāḷvār, who is considered the foremost among the Āḷvārs, constitute by far the most important. Among his four works, *Tiruvāymoḻi* is held in special esteem as it contains a superb exposition of his rich and mature religious experiences and philosophical insights. This thesis is an attempt to expound the literary excellences of this unique Tamil classic.

"From the philosophical and spiritual point of view, Māṟan's (Maṟan is one of the names by which Nammāḷvār calls himself) poetry ranks among the highest in Tamil literature[4].". This is the verdict of one of the greatest poets of our time. Vaiṣṇava tradition holds Nammāḷvār's compositions in special veneration and assigns to his *Tiruvāymoḻi* a place of prime importance. There have been countless thinkers and seers of repute in Tamilnāṭu and elsewhere. There have also been most eminent poets. But Nammāḻvār is unique in that he is at once a great poet and a great seer. Studies in Tiruvāymoḻi have for the most part taken it as the repository of philosophical and religious wisdom. What is the extent to which his poetic gifts have contributed to his greatness? What are his special merits as a poet? Questions such as these have not received much serious attention.

Persons who express common place ideas in beautiful words and imagery are hailed as poets. When their thoughts are so profound and expressed so powerfully they naturally achieve distinction as sublime poets. Nammāḻvār's place is among the group of sublime poets, among the galaxy of the greatest poets of the world. Philosophers need not necessarily be gifted with poesy; but great poets must of necessity be gifted with philosophic vision. That Nammāḻvār combines in himself the role of a great seer and a great poet will be evident from a consideration of his compositions. He refers to himself as a poet and no where as a seer and distinguishes himself from other poets and calls himself a 'poet of the creator of the world' (3—9—10) and his poetry as 'great Tamil epic or Sāstra' (10—6—4), 'flawless Tamil songs' (4—7—11) 'garland of verses' (3—8—10) and so on. Hence, it seems reasonable to infer that he greatly relished the title of 'poet'.

*The Greatness of Tiruvāymoḻi:*

Tiruvāymoḻi is the crown, the crest jewel as it were, of the *Divyaprabandas*. Unlike other *prabandas* it has been commented upon by several eminent thinkers. Five great commentaries have been held in high esteem from early times. And they are – The Six thousand, The Nine thousand, The Twelve thousand, The Twenty four thousand and the Thirty six thousand. They are so called from their extent or degree of elaboration. Although all the compositions comprising the Divyaprabanda describe the glories of Bhagavān, The Adorable Lord, Tiruvāymoḻi together with its commentaries has the signal distinction of being called *Bhagavad – viṣaya*. Captivated by the moving devotional songs of Nammāḻvār, the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas have written extensively elucidating the wealth of meaning embedded therein and extolled their greatness.

'*Ācāryahṛdaya*', is entitled to special mention as giving an insight into the heart of Śaṭakōpa, the author of Tiruvāymoḻi. *Srīvacanabhūsaṇa* and other esoteric works (rahasya granthas) of Piḷḷaiḷokācārya have been inspired by the hymns of Nammāḻvār. Vēdānta Dēsika composed two works in Sanskrit expounding the essence of Tiruvāymoḻi for the benefit of those unacquainted with Tamil. Maṇavāḷamāmuni expressed the gist of the teachings of Tiruvāymoḻi in a hundred stanzas in a work entitled *Tiruvāymoḻi–nūṟṟantāti*. Kōnēri tāsyai set out the great thoughts imbedded in the first verse of Tiruvāymoḻi in her *Tiruvāymoḻivācakamālai*. How Sri Ramanuja held Tiruvāymoḻi in high esteem and found it an invaluable help in composing his *Śrī Bhāṣya* would be explained later in this work in the light of the Vaiṣṇava tradition.

*In the Footsteps of Nammāḷvār:*

From the time of Kampar down to that of Subramania Bhārati, reputed Tamil poets and commentators like Parimēḷalakar have been greatly influenced by the profoundity of thought and the diction and imagery of the Tiruvāymoḷi, as will be evident from their works. *śaṭakōpar aṇtāti* of Kampar is a work in praise of Nammāḷvār and his compositions. *aṣṭaprabandas* of Maṇavāḷatāsar, also known as Piḷḷaiperumāḷ Aiyaṅkār, are replete with praises of Nammāḷvār; and they use freely the 'Āḷvār's ideas and even his words. A few scholars who lived in the birth place of Nammāḷvār, have written a few works including works on poetics, which reveal their devotion to the Āḷvar. It is learnt that Tiruvāymoḷi has been transliterated in other languages, such as Telugu, Bengali and Marāti and chanted.

*Tiruvāymoḷi Today:*

The practice initiated by Nātamuni and fostered by Sri Ramanuja of chanting in Viṣṇu temples select verses from *Divyaprabanda* as of equal importance with the vedas – nay, even of greater importance – continues to this day. No other work enjoys such a prestige. During the month of *mārkaḷi* (December – January), a special ten-day festival called *Tiruvāymoḷit tiruṇaḷ* is conducted in honour of Tiruvāymoḷi. Nevertheless, in general, Tiruvāymoḷi is held in esteem only by Vaiṣṇavites, and is valued mostly as a religious book; but its greatness even as literature has not been fully recognised. The grest masters who have commented on it have referred to its literary merits, and significant word sequence (patacāram). They have however mainly concentrated on religious aspects. It is the literary aspect that is going to be the primary concern of the present writer. Further these commentaries are sealed

books to many, as they are in *maṇipravāḷa* style, a kind of Tamil with large admixture of Sanskrit. Those acquainted with Tamil alone or with Sanskrit alone cannot follow it fully.

From the time of Nātamuni who gave a fillip to the study of *Divyaprabanda*, Vedānta flourished as a twofold stream - *ubhaya vedanta* - a Sanskritic stream founded on the unpaniṣads and a Tamil stream based on *Divyaprabanda*; and for some centuries which marked the keyday of Vaiṣṇavism, scholars cultivated both Sanskrit and Tamil and were proficient in both languages. But with the lapse of time, such scholarship became rare. Therefore, the maṇipravāḷa commentaries could not further the efforts of the Āḻvārs to make religious and philosophical truths percolate among the masses. In recent years fruitful efforts have been made to render these commentaries in Tamil.

***Work done in this field so far:***

The first printed edition of Tiruvāymoḻi appeared in 1859. This edition of the text along with an annotation by an early writer was published by Govinda Pillai and Chengalvarāya Nāyakar. This was followed in course of time by a number of other editions. Tiruvāymoḻi was issued in Telugu script also. In recent times, Mātavatāsan with financial aid from Maṇali Trust published an edition with sketches of the lives of Āḻvārs and brief accounts of holy places sung by them. This and S. Rajam's issue of Tiruvāymoḻi in paper back are very useful to many a reader. Among the various efforts made to popularise the study of Tiruvāymoḻi and the commentaries there on, special mention is to be made of Kāñcīpuram Mahavidvan Aṇṇaṅkarācāriar's edition of Tiruvāymoḻi and other prabandams with his

elaborate commentaries under the title *Dīpikā* noted for their remarkable clarity. S. Krishnamachariar brought out an edition with the five commentaries which are in maṇipravāḷa and the bare text also.

The Tamil rendering of the famous commentary, The Thirty six Thousand under the title ',īṭṭin Tamiḻākkam'' by vidvan B. R. Purushottama Naidu, published by the Madras University is a landmark in this study. Through the efforts of T. D. Ramaswami Naidu a Tamil translation of the Sanskrit quotations occurring in the īṭu has been published. He also publịshsd a book called *Akapporuḷum Aruḷicceyalum* (1939). In the same year A. Ranganatha Mudaliar broughtout a book extending over 450 pages on Tiruvāymoḻi. The Tirupati Tirumalai Devasthanam has published Balasundara Nayagar's *'Tiruvāymoḷi Akapporuḷ pāsura viḷakkam'* in two parts and Būvarākam Pillai's *Tiruvāymoḻi viḷakkam*. Rajaji's Bhaktiṉeṟi and 'P. Sri's *Tiruvāymoḻitteḷivurai* explain some stanzas from Tiruvāymoḻi. *Divyaprabandasāram* of 'P. Sri' and *Bhaktip-pūṅkā* and *Vaiṣṇavapūṅkā* of Etirājulu are prose treatises helpful to the ordinary reader. The Ramakrishna Mutt's publication entitled "'Tiru-Aruḷ-moḻi'' explains some select verses from the Āḻvārs.

Among English publications on the subject, two deserve special mention. One is D. Ramaswami Aiyangar's *Peeps into Mysticism* and the other is *Grains of Gold* published by R. S. Desikan and B. L Ranganathan. J. S. M. Hooper has translated some verses of Nammāḻvār. None of these, with the exception of Ranganatha mudaliar's work, inquires Into Tiruvāymoḻi in its entirety. Even Ranganatha Mudaliar's work cannot be considered a research contribution. It is a matter for regret that even those who had intended to complete their work have not been able to do so.

S. Krishṇaswami Aiyangar, M. Raghava Aiyangar, T. A. Gopinatha Rao and M. Rajamanikkam have in their publications presented valuable material for helping to determine the age of the Āḻvārs[5].

Besides articles that appeared sporadically in the pages of the *Indian Antiquary* and *Seṉ Tamiḻ*, there has not been any treatise dealing systematically with the literary aspects of *Tiruvāymoḻi*. The article on Nammāḻvār by J. Parthasarati of Agra University[6] and that by M. Jean Filliozat Professor au College de France, Paris[7] deserve notice; but they too are brief. *A critical study of Ācāryahṛdayam* by the author of the present thesis and the doctoral thesis of N. Subbu Reddiar of the Sri Venkateswara University entitled '*Religion and Philosophy of the Āḻvārs, with Special reference to Nammāḻvār*' may be reckoned worthwile contributions to the subject. 'Tiru Vi ka's brochure *Tamiḻnāṭu and Nammāḻvār* and Rev. Fr. S. Michael Hṛdayam's 'Treatment of Nature in Tiruvāymoḻi' are of interest to the research scholar.

The souvenirs published by the Pondichery Tirumāl Tiruṉeṟi Maṉṟam, Sri Ramanuja Mission and Sri Vēdānta Dēsika Seventh centenary celebrations committee and Āṇḍavan's Shastiabdapūrti celebrations committee contain some valuable articles on the subject. But there has not been any sustained and systematic effort to deal with Tiruvāymoḻi as a whole from the point of view of its poetry. Hence this investigation.

*The plan of research* i.e., The Main Divisions of this investigation:

Since an authentic account of the life of Nammāḻvar an of the times in which he flourished is a desideratum for correct understanding of Tiruvāymoḻi, a criticai reviewof

the extant accounts of the life and age of Nammāḻvār is first undertaken; and on the basis of the findings of this review, placing, greater reliance on internal evidence, a fairly dependable account is sought to be presented. What was the name given to Nammāḻvār by his parents? What were the honorific names conferred on him? These questions hitherto unanswered have been tackled. The question how far reliance can be extended on the traditional belief that the Āḻvār observed silence for sixteen years and never even uttered a word is also examined. It has been shown that it is impossible to believe that he received no education. What were the holy shrines he visited? What is his place as a religious leader? Other aspects taken up for discussion are, his contact with and consideration for mankind, the purity of his heart, the universality of his outlook and the quintessence of his teachings.

In the next section as the Āḻvār is a great poet, his own conception of poetry as gleaned from his work is descrribed as it is of special value. Then it is shown that in the manner of most great poets, Nammāḻvār also declares that he is not the real author of his work but that some Divine force inspired him to compose what he did and that he was just an instrument of the Divine. The rapturous joy that the Āḻvār experienced in composing his poem and the advice he tenders to other poets to follow his own example are then explained. That he is a revolutionary poet of his age is indicated.

Of the many factors that account for the greatness of his work, one is the dexterous use that the Āḻvār makes of verses in accordance with the tradition of Akapporuḷ, while elaborating philosophical themes and singing the glories of the Lord. To what extent he has followed that tradition is also discussed. Although from an early age the Āḻvār's

thoughts were exclusively centred in God and Kaṇṇan was everything to him, he puts himself in the position of a bride (nāyaki) and clothes his spotless God-love, spiritual hunger, in exquisite poetry in the language of the love-lorn maid. In this venture how far the Āḻvār follows the early Tamil tradition, and where he deviates therefrom are considered. How he has achieved signal victory in this endeavour is indicated. It Is also shown that just as even in the Caṅkam age Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai arose initiating a line somewhat different from the literary convention regarding Āṟṟuppaṭai set forth in Tolkāppiyam[8] the Āḻvār again while following the Caṅkam tradition with regard to akapporuḷ poetry, in the main, yet started a new mode by singing of god-love. He transgresses a few conventions or traditions set forth in earlier grammars on Akapporuḷ.

Next, the Special features of narration and style found in Nammāḻvār's work are discussed. His is not a poem narrating a continuous story. But it exhibits all the other main features characteristic of Epic poetry. The characters, the subject matter, absence of conflict between the beginning and the end, style - these and other matters are discussed. How the Āḻvār handles with perfect ease the verse form to express abstract philosophical doctrines with remarkable clarity and how he has fashioned the hymns in soul-stirring strains have been explained with the aid of suitable illustrations from Tiruvāymoḻi.

The next section is devoted to an exposition of the deft manner in which the Āḻvār has employed several figures of speech, which Tolkāppiyam describes as Uvamai, uruvakam - simile and metaphor. What lends special distinction, what beautifies a poem are the figures of speech employed therein. Indeed, they are indispensable for setting forth the theme of the poem to best advantage.

The manner in which a poet employs figures of speech is said to reveal his mind, his poetic genius and his greatness. It is a mystery how the Āḻvār exhibits this skill in the dexterous use of these devices. Only he who has achieved mastery over his senses could walk the straight path of religious life It is explained how the Āḻvār in addition to achieving selfmastery acquired great facility to look at the world with the penetration cf a great poet and use apposite similes.

A special part of this sectlon is devoted to the suggestive character, the implied significance of the Āḻvār's compositions, what the Sanskritist calls the dhvani. This is an important aspect of akapporuḷ songs. The various ways in which subtle suggestions have been made by the Āḻvār are pointed out with proper illustrations.

Exquisite descriptions of nature abound in all literatures to the extent of making one wonder whether one who could not appreciate nature be called a poet. In Caṅkam poetry descriptions of nature appear only as a background for the main theme portrayed. In the next stage, when didactic poems appeared, descriptions of nature do not figure, as there is little scope for them in that context. The place of nature in devotional songs, especially how Nammāḻvār experienced natural phenomena with the aid of his senses and described them is elaborately discussed. With the exception of pālai (the desert region) and mullai (forest region), the other three regions have been described; even of mullai there are a few references.

What is the special quality of his mind when he perceives nature? Sometimes he imagines that natural objects too are like himself, suffering from the pangs of separation, and he feels for them; and sometimes he fancies

that natural phenomena are unmindtul of him and thereby intensify his own suffering. By and large, he looks upon nature as something related to him by bonds of sympathy and love. He derives great joy from the realisation that the Lord is closely associated with nature. These various types expressed in certain special ways are herein indicated

Subject matter, feelings and emotions may be common to poetry and to prose. But the peculiar feature of poetry is the word-sequence and musical cadance. Form is essential to poetry. Its quality is viewed trom the angle of rhythm and metre. So far no one has studied this aspect of Tiruvāymoḻi. Some of the editions of Tiruvāymoḻi text have been published even without the editor's indicating its feet. In a few, like that of Sri Rajam's edition, the stanzas have been printed with the words separated out to facilitate easy study. In a few others, the text is split up in the manner in which they are chanted in temples. In some editions only names of the metre to which the verses belong have been indicated. But here too the editions differ in their classification. It is difficult especially when the verses form part of supplemental metre (pāvinams) to assert that a certain type belongs to one particuiar mode of metre, for the same type of verses may be taken to belong to one or the other types o f metre.

In accordance with the principle laid down in *Tolkāppiyam*, *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* and other prosodical works and with the aid of *Viruttappāviyal*, the metre of the stanzas has been determined. It is to be remembered whether musical songs should strictly conform to the rules of prosody. When Nātamuni codified the *Divyaprabandas*, he set them to music. Some publications contain references

to the old musical modes. But there is little relation between them and the manner in which they are chanted in temples. The need for systematic research in this field is indicated.

A separate chapter has been devoted to the study of skilful use of purāṇic stories by the Āḻvār. How the time old stories come in handy for the Āḻvār to impress his ideas is explained. Without understanding them one cannot appreciate the poems fully. The suggestive meaning they denote gives a charm to the hymns and increases their excellence is pointed out.

The last part of the thesis is a comparative study. Only when Tiruvāymoḻi is compared with the writings of the earlier period and with those that were contemporaneous, its characteristics could be correctly evaluated. Hence, it is compared with Caṅkam literature, more especially with paripāṭal and with Tirukkuṟaḷ among the ethical works and with the sacred writings of the saiva saints, like those of Tirumūlar, Appar, Suṉtarar and Māṇikkavāsakar, each one as a representative of his age. Similarities in the words used and in the sentiments expressed have been noted. There are many features in common, but differences also are noticeable. The rationale of these differences has been sought to be ascertained to the extent possible.

Many of the works of a later period have followed the footsteps of the Āḻvār. There are reasons to believe that poets like Kampar must have taken many of their ideas and even expressions from Tiruvāymoḻi. This is a fit matter for an independant investigation and is, therefore, not taken up here. T here is a great deal in common between Nammāḻvā and the other Āḻvārs. As this aspect has been dealt with in the later day works based on Tiruvāymoḻi and the various commentaries on it, it is not taken up here.

*Conclusion*.

Dividing the subject under the heads indicated above, the investigator has made a comprehensive study of the literary excellences of Tiruvāymoḻi. True, the main concern of the Āḻvār was to teach the Vaiṣṇava thought and mode of life; but in achieving this, he has succeeded in giving Tiruvāymoḻi a unique poetic garb and setting. As the literary aspect of this great work has not been systematically studied and as the importance of the work warrants it, this study has been undertaken. Considerations of differences between the northern (Vaṭakalai) and the southern (tenkalai) schools of Vaiṣṇavism have not been allowed colour the views expressed; and conclusions drawn have been from the point of view of the impartial researcher are bound to stand the test of time. "Poetry is not mere verbal music, word symphony; it conveys a significance and affords the joy of verbal music; it conveys feelings and has an ethical quality pointing the way to the good life; great poetry does all these at once," says R. S. Desikan.[9] Tiruvāymoḻi exemplifies all these characteristics. "It conveys profound thoughts. The farther we delve into it, the richer is the find of new gems of thought. It is no exaggeration to say that it is an inexhaustible ocean keeping in its deep recesses unfold riches." This piece of research has enabled me to realise how truthful this statement has been. As this thesis was being completed it was noticed that in one of his articles published some years ago Rev. John. C. Plott has arrived at conclusions in some respects similar to those of the author. This section shall be concluded with a quotation from the same article.[10]

"Even the gīta Govinda of Jaya Dēva, honoured as it is by scholars the world over, cannot compare with the Tiruvāymoḻi of Nammāḻvār...... enough to point out that the

Tiruvāymoḻi is so composed that each stanza of the thousand must begin with the same word as that with which the preceding stanza ends Just as the minutiae of the rules of the composition enhance its charm, so the plan of the whole Tiruvāymoḻi, gives it an artistic unity that confirms (or rather displays) the basic rule that 'art concealed is art revealed'. The stanzas are in groups of ten, followed by an eleventh which gives the key to the theme of the ten. according to the author's own intention.. ... These 'tens' are in turn, grouped into 'hundreds' so that the pattern of the whole is remarkably like the construction of a modern western symphonic composition; there are innumerable themes and counter - themes and sub - themes which are reiterated with increasingly enriched variations or again, like the unspeakable richness of karnātic music, with all of its delicate intricacies of melody and rhythm, or again, like a stained glass - window of a medieval cathedral with all of its grandeur and richness as well as its lyrical traceries and interlinking lines.

In all the world's devotional literature I have not yet found a parallel. The Imitation of christ, the Tao Tehking, the Gathas of Zarathūstra - I am even almost bold enough to say, the Bhagavad Gītā itself, do not excel the Tiruvāymoḻi. It contains everything that any aspirant to the spiritual life could possibly ask for in book form. It has never failed me, whether in moments of dejection or in times of pride and hyper elation. It has aesthetic refinement which many other classics lack. It abounds in moral teaching that other erotic mysticism - the Sufis for example or the Gīta Gōvinda lacks. Its psychological insight is not less than the best of the Buddhist canon; and is an adequate guide for any yogi and yet it goes quickly through these things directly to the heart of the living God. It is

utterly sound theologically and yet there is not a trace of dogmatism in it. It is a Bible, a prayer-book, a hymnal, a philosophical treatise and a guide for meditation and devotion, all rolled into one. A gem of pure and intense experience, it fully deserves to be included in any World Bible that may be forthcoming."

# CHAPTER - I

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE AUTHOR OF TIRUVĀYMOḶI

Literary critics have for long believed that a knowledge of the life and personality of an author is an invaluable aid to a correct understanding of his works. Sometimes a close relation between the life of the author and his literary compositions is discernible and in some cases no such relationship is easily noticeable. The quality of his life may have no direct bearing on his works. But careful analysis may reveal that in some hidden manner its effect is reflected in his writings. "The relation between the private life and the work is not a simple relation of cause and effect."[1] Further "A work of art may rather embody the 'dream' of an author rather than his actual life or it may be the 'mask', the 'anti-self' behind which his real person is hiding or it may be a picture of life from which the author wants to escape."[2] In the case of a subjective poet, though not in other cases, it is possible to infer the characteristic features of his style of life. It may even be ascertained how his way of life determined the course of his poem. But only the most penetrating investigation could bring it to light. Hence a study of Tiruvāymoḷi may usefully commence with an inquiry into the life and times of its author.

### *Sources :*

There are three main sources for the biography of Nammāḷvār, the author of Tiruvāymoḷi. The first is, of course, his own works. The second are the records of his

life and work written more than three centuries later. *Divyasūri sarita* of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita who is known to have been a contemporary of Sri Ramanuja (12th C) and books based thereon, such as *Ārāyirappaḍi guruparampara Parabhāvam* (in maṇi pravāḷam) of Pinpaḷakia Perumāḷ Gīyar and Upadēsa Ratna-mālai of Maṇavāḷamāmuni who lived in the 15th Century are important sources coming under the second group. Relevant materials gathered by research scholars from inscriptions of the 8th or 9th centuries constitute the third source. These may be deemed as original sources.

About fifty years ago a number of eminent scholars sought to reconstruct the life of Nammāḻvār with the aid of available material. Their articles which appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* and as brochures are of considerable interest. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in inquiry in this field. An attempt has been made in this chapter to review the work done so far and determine the age of Nammāḻvār.

### *Life of Nammāḻvār:*

The traditional account: The brief sketch found in *Ārāyirappaḍi Guruparampara* mixes up fact and fiction. One has to sift the authentic from what is not so authentic. The account may be summed up as follows:- The Lord took several avatāras in order to reduce mankind from bondage of samsāra; but that was not wholly fruitful; so He thought of incarnating as a man among men, and with this idea, He directed His attendants to take birth as men and He Himself incarnated as Nammāḻvār. There is nothing surprising in people accepting such a view, if one considers the life and works of Nammāḻvār and their abiding influence on the lives of countless generations of people.

Nammāḻvār was born in Tirukkurukūr, a village on the banks of the Tāmraparaṉi. He belonged to a veḷḷāḷa family following the Vaiṣṇava faith. Tracing his ancestors through several generations, the account mentions the following names - Tiruvaḻutiṉāṭar, Aṟaṉtāṅkiyār, Cakrapāṅiyār, Accutār, Centāmaraikkaṇṇar, Poṟkāriyār and Kāriyār. The last of these was his father. His mother was Uṭayanaṅkai of Tiruvaṇparicāram. The Āḻvār is referred to as a gift of Tirukkuruṅkuṭi Nampi, the Viṣṇu Deity of the place. In answer to the prayers of the parents of Nammāḻvār, the Lord agreed to be born as their child and caused Cēnaimutaliyār, His commander-in-chief, to be born as Nammāḻvār. He is said to have been born on the 43rd day of *Kaliyuka* in the year *Vekutānya*, on full moon day in Vaikāsi in the constellation Viśāka. It is note worthy that such details are not furnished about other Āḻvārs in this *Guruparamparā*. It is equally worthy of mention that Buddha is also said to have been born in the month of Vaikāsi on the Viśāka pūrṇimā day.

The names of seven of his ancestors have been given, perhaps in accordance with the tradition of mentioning seven genarations that preceded. It is likewise a tradition that great personages are deemed to be born of the grace of the Lord and consequently they are elevated to the position of incarnations of the Supreme Being.

The behaviour of the new born was thoroughly unlike that of ordinary children. He would not cry or take in any nourishment. The parents were naturally upset and they took the child to the temple of Ātiṉāta, left him at the foot of the tamarind tree there and spent their time in prayer. There he remained for sixteen years, till a devout Brahmin from a neighbouring village who went on a pilgrimage to sacred places like Ayōdya noticed an illumination in the

southern region returned south pursuing that radiant light and noticed that halo in the very place where the Āḻvār stood in meditation. This is reminiscent of the halo noticed at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Noticing that the child was unmoving, the Brahmin wished to test whether it was capable of thought and threw a small brickbat near the child. Lo' the child woke up from samādhi and looked round. Encouraged by this, the Brahmin put the question, When the little one took birth from the dead, what would it eat and where would it stay? Quick came the reply – "It would eat it and stay there". These were the first words that ever came from the lips of Āḻvār since his birth. Struck by the power of his thought and keenly desirous of having him for his preceptor, the Brahmin entreated the Āḻvār to accept him as a disciple; when this request was granted, he felt that his life's ambition was fulfilled, and stayed with his master and recorded his song out-pourings.

The traditional account also states that the Āḻvār did not move away from the tamarind tree to the end of his life and that the Viṣṇu Lords of the 108 holy shrines appeared before his mind's eye and granted him the beatific vision. The Āḻvār composed four works for bringing round wayward souls, and lett for paramapada at the age of thirty five.

There is also mention of one incident namely that the Caṅkam poets refused to accord a place of honour to the Āḻvār's composition, namely, Tiruvāymoḻi, but when a transcript of the ten stanzas from that work commencing with the words 'Kaṇṇan Kaḻaḻiṇai' (10-5) was sent to them, the Caṅkam plank accepted it rhrowing out the works of other poets; and this miracle not only silenced the opposition

but made the Caṅkam poets repent their folly and revere Nammāḻvār as a divine bard.

*The Āḻvār's names :*

Māṟan is the Āḻvār's real name. But tradition has it that he came to be called Māṟan, signifying 'one who is altogether different' because unlike the generality of children he did not take milk or cry. Another explanation, which is perhaps more plausible, is that his father gave him this name out of regard for the Pāṇḍian king in whose service he was a dignitary. It is noteworthy that some of his ancestors also had this name. The Āḻvār's reference to himself as 'Vaḻutivaḷaṉāṭan' (2-8-11), (5-6-11) and (10-4-11) lends support to this interpretation. On the basis of the Ānamalai inscriptions, T.A. Gopinatha Rao is tempted to say that the Āḻvār's grandfather was the Kārimāṟan referred to as Uttaramaṉtri in that inscription. Such an indentification would help to solve many an otherwise inexplicable difficulty in the prevalent accounts of the life of Nammāḻvār. If this identification is correct, it is easy to see that Nammāḻvar was named Māṟan after his grandfather.[3] The Āḻvār's other names are 'Śaṭakōpa, Parāṅkusa, Vakuḷābharaṇa, Vaḻutiṉāṭar and so on.

Śaṭa is the name of an air that is said to subject a child immediately after birth to ignorance and make it enter on such acts as helpless cry. But, since this divine child conquered it and drove it away, he was called Śaṭakōpa. In many places in Tiruvāymoḻi (97 places out of 100), the Āḻvār refers to himself by this name. One is tempted to think that this was the name given to him by his parents. Sometimes he calls himself Kurukūr Śaṭakōpan, tagging on to his name that of the place of his birth. And sometimes, the name Śaṭakōpar is preceded, and sometimes succeeded,

by Māṟan, so that it appears as Māṟān Saṭakōpan or Śatakōpan Māṟan. Either way, they signify one and the same person. Vaḻutiṉāṭan is another name by which he refers to himself in two places in Tiruvāymoḻi (3-6-11) and (9-2-11). Since the part of the country where he lived is know as Vaḻutiṉātu, it is not unlikely that he was born in a family of petty chieftains who ruled over that region. That is why perhaps the Āḻvār actually speaks of himself as a ruler - 'Kurukaikkōn' (3-6-11).

'Vakuḷābharaṇar, means one who is adorned by vakwḷa flowers (Mimusops elengi). This flower is known as makiḻ in Tamil. In (4-10-10) occurs the expression 'Makiḻ māḻai mārpinan Māṟan'. Vakuḷābharaṇa is a sanskrit rendering of this expression. Vakuḷa flower appears to have been an insignia of Nammāḻvār.

For the reason that his songs were a powerful force in vanquishing rival philosophical schools he might have been hailed as Parāṅkusa, the great aṅkusa (goad) before which elephants quail. T. A. Gopinatha Rao suggests that a more plausible interpretation is that the Āḻvār was so named after Parāṅkusa Pandiya the father of king Parāṉtaka. But the one difficulty in accepting this suggestion is this. Why does the Āḻvār not use this name at least once? There has been no answer to this. On the other hand if the first view that the name was given to Āḻvār by others on account of his great act of subduing his rivals, then there s every justification on the part of Āḻvār to avoid the incorporation of such a honorific name in his treatise.

Tradition has it that he is commonly referred to as Nammāḻvār for the reason that he was the chosen of the Lord, who out of the abundance of his grace hailed him as 'Our Āḻvār - Nam Āḻvār'. This prefix 'Nam' signifies

unique greatness, and in consequence the great esteem and endearment he evokes in us. Upadēsa Ratna Mālai[4] stresses this idea.

Thus, Śaṭakōpa and Māṟan are names descriptive of his particular nature. Vakuḷābharaṇar and Vaḷutiṉāṭar are acquired on account of special considerations. Parāṅkusa. Nammāḻvār and the like are names by which he come to be revered later by posterity in recognition of his true greatness.

*Nammāḻvār's Parents:*

The Āḻvār's father was Kāri, as is evident from the references in Tiruvāymoḻi to 'Kāri māṟan' meaning Māṟan the son of Kāri. From the time of Tolkāppiyar it was customary to refer to the names of father and son together in this fashion. The names – Māṟan, Vaḷutiṉāṭar and Kurukaikkōn – may suggest that he belonged to a line whose members held positions of importance in the Pandiya kingdom. If T. A. Gopinatha Rao is right in identifying Kāri, Uttaramantri with Nammāḻvār's father – it seems to be a right guess – he must have been, as the name signifies, a dignitary next to the Chief Minister or adviser; and his father too was Māṟan, and had also the appellation of Maturakavi and that his native place was Karavaṉtapuram alias Kaḷakkāṭu and that he excavated a Viṣṇu Shrine and installed an image in it. On this view, Nammāḻvār must have been named after his grandfather – according to the well-known practice. The fact that the traditional account does not refer to this, cannot be taken as sufficient evidence against this interpretation.

Though Gopinatha Rao thinks that Karavaṉtapuram was his birth-place it was likely that when Poṟkāriyār was

administering Vaḻutiṉāṭu the son born to him there was quite naturally named after his ruler, and that in like manner, Nammāḻvār gave his disciple one of the names of his own father namely Maturakavi. Traditional accounts may not be as authentic as the inscriptions of that period. In this situation, nothing could be asserted definitely. A hypothesis that could reconcile both is to be sought. Gopinatha Rao's view seems plausible and he formulates his views on the following grounds. Nammāḻvār is the only Āḻvār who has sung in praise of certain holy shrines in the hilly tracts quite inaccessible. They are the following Ten which are situated in three different regions. (1) Tiruvāṭṭāṟu, (2) Tirucirṟāṟṟut tiruccenkunṟūr, Tirupuliyūr, Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, Tirukkaṭittānam, Tiruvallavḷ and Tiruvāṟanviḷai and (3) Tirukkāṭkarai, Tirumūḻikkaḷan and Tirunāvāy. These ten holy spots are in places covered with thick forests where wild animals abound. Difficult of access to most others, it must have been quite different to Nammāḻvār. On account of the position that his father occupied, Nammāḻvār must have had special facility for visiting these places otherwise difficult to reach. The traditional account has it that the Lords of those shrines presented themselves to the Āḻvār in his own place. Even the admission that such beatific vision was vouchsafed to him does not necessarily imply that he did not visit any place. Further, the reference to 108 holy spots must have been made only in later times, especially when the *Divya Prabanda* came to be codified. Hence Gopinatha Rao's theory seems acceptable.

### *Āḻvār's Education:*

The Guruparampara records that for sixteen years Nammaḻvār was in samādhi, did not speak a word, and that the Lord had caused Sēnaimutaliyār to instruct him soon after birth in all the mantras. But from a study of the

Āḻvār's compositions it would be abundantly clear that he was not only wellversed in all the vedic lore but was also intimately acquainted with the Tamil literary tradition. (This will be illustrated in appropriate places in this thesis). The traditional view may have been inspired by a desire to highlight his divine vision. It may be accepted that spiritual illumination, insight into the nature of reality and the mystic significance of mantras came to him through divine grace; but an unbiased reader of his works would be tempted to conclude that knowledge of sacred and secular literature and understanding of the world must have come to him through education.

### *His Works :*

After Maturakavi joined the Āḻvār as disciple, he functioned as amanuensis recording for posterity the songs as they came from the master's lips. Tradition has it that the four works that the Āḻvār composed - Tiruviruttam, Tiruvāciriyam, Periyatiruvantāti and Tiruvāymoḻi appeared over a period of four and a half years. The first three of these works are brief compositions; and they are said to embody the essence of the - Rg, Yajus and Atarva vedas, While the fourth, namely, Tiruvāymoḻi (called also Paṇṇār pāṭal) is extensive and is said to express the essence of Sāmavēda. In his own work, Maturakavi says, "For the delectation of devotees Nammāḻvār with great compassion set forth the essence of the sacred vedas in a thousand inimitable Tamil verses.[6]"

"aṭiyavar inpuṟa
aruḷinān avvarumaṟaiyin poruḷ
-......... āyiram in tamiḻ pāṭinān"

While the disciple, a brahmin and one senior in age says this, the Āḻḻvār himself nowhere mentions that he sets forth

the teachings of the vedas in his Tiruvāymoḷi. This illustrates one truth, namely Ñāna or vedic truths are eternal. some sages who intuited them have set them forth in Sanskrit. They are known as Sanskrit vedas. Likewise, the Āḻvār who knew these eternal truths communicated them in Tamil through his hymns and they constitute the Tamil vēdas. The last great ācārya Sri Maṇavāḷamāmuni also speaks of "Vētam Tamiḻ ceyta meyyan eḻil kurukaiṉātan"[8]. The story that the poets of Tamil Caṅkam at first refused to accept Nammāḻvār's poetry as of a high order was referred to earlier. The real difficulty in accepting this episode as genuine is that the Caṅkam age and the period to which Nammāḻvār belongs are altogether different. How then did such a story gain currency? Such stories are prevalent even about Tirukkuṟaḷ and Kampar's great work, The Rāmāyaṇa. These works differ in some respects from the tradition of Caṅkam literature. One such is their aversion to sing the glories of mortals. For example, in the stanza commencing with the words - 'connāl virōtamitu' (3-9-1), the Āḻvār himself declares that what he says may not be congenial to the dispositions and pre-occupations of the poets of the day but he feels it his duty to advise them properly.

There was a time, when Tamil Caṅkam enjoyed such a great prestige that any work to be considered good poetry had to win the stamp of approval by the Caṅkam So it is probable that those who were impressed by the greatness of Tiruvāymoḷi sought to establish its excellence by a story of this type, suggesting that those who were at one stage hesitant to acknowledge the greatness of Tiruvāymoḷi came to be impressed by its excellence. Those who maintain that Tiruvāymoḷi expounds vedic teaching would also like to show that it was held in esteem by Tamil poets too. That is perhaps the motive behind such episodes.

*His times:*

Some put the number of Āḻvārs as twelve and some reckon it as ten. The latter reckoning leaves out the names of Maturakavi, who knew no God other than Nammāḻvār, and of Āṇṭāḻ, the foster-child of Periyāḻvār. This is perhaps on the supposition that the number 'ten' has a special significance. *Guruparampara accounts* do not tell us definitely when these God-intoxicated persons flourished. Most people find it difficult to accept the great antiquity assigned to thcm. Those who look at the problem with historical perspective assign them to the period 5th to the 10th C. A. D.[9] This is the considered view of research scholars. If, however, religious sentiment outruns historical sense, it might question this conclusion, not otherwise, says 'The story of Tamil Research '[18]

From the 10th C. to the 15th C. the period commencing from Nātamuni and ending with Maṇavāḷamāmuni there has been a continuous Vaiṣṇava succession of ācāryas. "The Āḻvārs are persons who were blessed with perfect knowledge and devotion by God and they belonged to different castes; while the ācāryas were brahmins who by dint of their austerities attained wisdom; and they revered the Āḻvārs and followed their footsteps and attained the blessed state."[11] Nammāḻvār is the foremost among the Āḻvārs, even as Sri Ramanuja is the foremost among the ācāryas. In singing the glories of Ramanuia, his disciple, Amutanār, says that "he attained blessedness by paying homage to Māṟan."[12] It is from stray verses and commentaries written by such persons that we get hints that help us to understand the Āḻvārs. Some of these may be noted here.

There are divergent accounts of the order in which the Āḻvārs appeared. In the main there are two views. According to one, Nammāḻvār is the 5th, coming after the first three

Āḻvārs and Tirumaḻicai Aḻvār. The other view considers him as the last of the Aḻvārs in point of time. A person's greatness is known only after he has achieved distinction and not at the time of birth itself. Hence, in the case of many great personages historians may know their closing day rather than the date of birth. This is particularly so at a time when the historical sense was lacking and when people were not keen on leaving records about themselves. So the dates of the birth of the Āḻvārs must have been recorded in later times according to the fancy of the chroniclers. With this background let us try to consider the conclusions that research scholars have arrived at regarding the date of Nammāḻvār.

In the light of the Ānamalai inscriptions, T. A. Gopinatha Rao assigns Nammāḻvār to the first half of the 9th C. "The various standpoints from which we have viewed the age of Nammāḻvār point in the aggregate to the first half of the 9th C. as the time when he lived and wrote his memorable Tiruvāymoḻi".[13] There is another evidence in support for this conclusion. Nammāḻvār sings in his Tiruvāymoḻi of Varakuṇamaṅkai and Sīvaramaṅkalam. The first is referred to in one place only (9-2-4), while there are ten stanzas devoted to the latter (5-7). Varakuṇamaṅkai must have been so named after king Varakuṇa Pāṇṭiya (792-835 A.D.). Sīvaramaṅkalam is the name of Nāṅkunēri. The copper plates of Sīvaramaṅkalam record that it was founded by Sīvaran, also known as Neṭuñceḻiyan (765-790 A.D.). It is but reasonable to infer that Nammāḻvār who refers to this place as Sīvaramaṅkalam must have flourished about 790 or thereafter. This conclusion seems to fit in with the Ānamalai inscriptions. Moreover, the details of the year of Nammāḻvār's birth given in Guruparampara agree with those of 798 A.D., says Gopinatha Rao. This

reinforces the view that Namāḷvār lived in the first part of the 9th C. A.D.

*Internal Evidence:*

Whether there are indications in Tiruvāymoḷi and other works of the Āḷvār to support the account given earlier is a relevant question in this context. Of internal evidence there is not much; only a few references could be found in his compositions. Even in the composition of Maturakavi Āḷvār, his disciple, no evidence could be traced.

*Child, the gift of the Lord:*

The Āḷvār's mother, Uṭaiyaṉaṅkai, belonged to the village, Tiruvaṇparicāram. This place is referred to as Āyccēri in Ācāryahṛdayam.[14] The parents of Nammāḷvār went to the shrine at Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi which is between Kurukūr and Tiruvaṇparicāram and prayed to the Lord for a progeny and their prayer was granted. A reference in *Tiruviruttam* may be taken as lending support to this. In a song coming as if from a mother greatly upset on account of her daughter's elopement the mother is made to speak of her daughter's youth, her modesty, her exquisite loveliness and pines in sympathy and exclaims what austerities and prayers she must have performed to get such a daughter.[15] It may not be far wrong if it is supposed that in composing this verse, the Āḷvār must have had in mind his own mother's acts of prayer and worship to beget him. Freely rendered the stanza means, "This woman, a receptacle of many sins, was blessed with this daughter who possesses slender waist and is like a tender timid deer, after worshipping and praising the holy feet of the Lord for quite a long time."

*The Recipient of the Lord's grace while quite young:*

The Āḻvār was an uncommon child, thoroughly unlike other children. As soon as he was born, the Lord blessed him with absolute wisdom. There is grateful acknowledgement of this by the Āḻvār in the very opening verse of Tiruv ymoḻi.

'Mayar vaṟa matiṉalam aruḷinan' (1-1-1)

Again in (8-8-11), he refers to himself as 'Śaṭakōpan who has been blessed by Tirumāl'. A bud spreads fragrance as it blossoms; but Tuḷasi, at its very birth, comes into existence with its fragrance. Like that, the Āḻvār at his very birth or immediately thereafter got enlightenment. That is the very reason why he stands far ahead of the other Āḻvārs. This too is not without support in Tiruvāymoḻi. Addressing the Lord, the Āḻvār says that "He has endowed him with love and devotion when he was yet a small child without any knowledge whatsoever."[16] It is possible to cite two other stanzas, one from Tiruviruttam and the other from Tiruvāymoḻi in support of this autobiographical reference.

Describing the mental state of her daughter, the mother says, "Her breasts have not yet been fully formed. Her locks have not yet grown abundantly and long. She is scantily clad. She still speaks like a child. Despite all this the youngster talks all the time about the Lord's home in Tiruvēṅkaṭam."[17] The reference here is clearly to the Āḻvār himself and to his state of mind. Though not from birth, at least from an early age, the Āḻvār's thoughts were wholly centered on God.

In a stanza about Tiruvaṇparicāram, (8-3-2) his mother's birth place, the Āḻvār says the four vedas and other sāstras are the refuge for mankind for putting them on the right

path; but for his part, he got rid of birth, death, disease, and other evils through service to the Lord.

*The tenor of his life :*

Nammāḻvār spent the first sixteen years of his life underneath a tamarind tree in the precincts of the temple of Ātiṉāta in his native place of Tirukkurukūr. Thereafter he lived for nineteen years, of which nearly five were spent in composing hymns. Pilgrimage to holy shrines must have taken up some years. The rest of his life was spent in contemplation on the Lord besides teaching those who sought his guidance and through his life and works the whole world wallowing in the mire of śamsāra through forgetting its moorings in the Lord. It is to be deduced for obvious reasons he did not enter upon matrimony, had no thought of progeny or of wordly position, power and pelf. In the works of most other poets who have composed religious lyrics there may be references to the manifold misdeeds committed by them in their nonage or the foibles of the world and expression of sympathy for their fallen state. References to sensual enjoyment, delusion and mental clouding brought on by these also find a place in their works. They also mention how through Divine grace they escaped from all these. The other Āḻvārs too are wont to confess their past sinful ways and warn mankind to avoid such transgressions in their lives. Such references are quite alien to Nammāḻvār's works. Both in singing the glories of the Lord and in depicting his own state of mind extreme humility is discernible. Although at the very outset he had acknowledged his having received illumination through the Lord's grace, like many a poet, he refers in many places to his unworthiness.

'Nīcanēn niṟaivonṟumilēn' (3-8-4)

"I am the lowliest of the low, possess no merit". "I am a man of little understanding";[18] "Youngster devoid of any virtue"[19] "I have performed no kind of penance, have no claim to understanding."[20] Since the one object that is ever before his mind is the Lord who is without an equal or a superior, it is but natural he is keenly aware of his own unworthiness. Even here he avoids the path of baseless running down of oneself and of describing oneself as wholly lost and thus exhibits the purity of his heart. It is impossible for him even to mention these acts.

He feels proud when he thinks of his great good fortune in having had the opportunity to sing the praises of the Lord and to offer Him his garland of songs, and exclaims 'who is there equal to me in the vast heavens?' (4-5-8) Realising how lucky he has been in being endowed with a mind that ever contemplates the great sport of the Divine Enchanter, he asks himself: 'Who is there equal to me in this expansive world?' (6-4-7 and 9). Finding that he has no peer either in this world or in the celestial regions' he sings in delight. His God-love is deep and intense. In speaking of it, he says, that the Benevolent Lord is his sire and sire's sire and so on for seven generations (3-3-2). He refers to himself with great gusto as Śaṭakōpa, the blessed slave of devotees of the Lord of the three worlds' the devotees' devotees, and so on to the fourth generation (7-1-11) and (8-9-11). Again, he says 'I am the servant of the Lord's servants, the servant of the servant's servants, and so on for seven generations and acknowledges them as his rightful masters' (3-7-10).

The Āḻvār's one object in life was serving the Lord, and he found his sustenance (dhāraka), nourshment (Pōsaka) and bliss (bhōgya) in Kaṇṇan (6-7-1). It could easily be seen that in the guise of a mother talking of her daughter's

frame of mind, the Āḻvār describes his own unquenchable thirst for God union. That is why Parāsara Bhaṭṭa calls him the very embodiment of Kṛṣṇa-thṛṣṇa tattva.[31]

*Nammāḻvār and Mankind*

Was the Āḻvār unmindful of the world? Had he no concern for the welfare of mankind? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. He was keenly alive to the ways of the world. He knew the strength and weakness of men He says in one place (4-9-1):

When a person is in distress, his enemies would feel happy at this, even some of his relatives would be among them; some would feel for him and sympathise with his lot. How strange are the ways of the world, says the Āḻvār feeling intensely for the attitude of mankind; and he ends with the prayer that the Lord may be pleased to take him away from such a world. The ten stanzas that constitute this section (4-9) proceed in this strain. In Tiruvāymoḻi (4-1) also we find the most telling description of the fickleness of fortune, inconstancy of youth and kindred matters.

Kinsmen and others would pose as fast friends, sharers of joys and sorrows alike and as steadfast refuge in dire distress, would gather round a person so long as he has riches and suck him dry like leeches and would be seen nowhere near when his wealth is gone (9-1-2). Perceiving the the way of the world, he entreats people not to put their trust in it. The base mentality of poets is also exposed by the Āḻvār (3-9-7). The great potency of the five senses is forcefully described (7-1-6). Hence he characterises the world as the most cruel and wicked (4-9-7). But, thal all these ills could be conquered through the grace of the Lord is his

firm belief. He repeats this in many places (10-1-7), (7-10-5), (4-5-3) and (3-10).

He has great praise for those who sing the praises of the Lord, for those whose hearts melt thereby and who grow into rapture and dance with joy; they are the 'truly wise and perfected'. 'Mulutuṇar nīrmaiyar' (3-5-6). Others are the thoughtless folk caught in hell (3-5-3); they live solely for fattening their belly and filling their stomach (3-5-7). It is out of compassion, that he describes them thus. He feels intensely for their misery and their folly; and says he would be the bondslave of those who worship the blessed feet of Lord and sing His glories, no matter to what caste they belong, even if they were candalas. Not only that, he asserts that he would be the servant of the servants of those devotees. They alone, says he, are entitled to reverenc (3-7-9). He prays for the wisdom that would make hime serve such Godly men (8-10-10).

How one, Who from his very birth lived as a spotless seer can be acquainted with the traditions of Tamil lyrical poetry and compose his immortal psalms in conformity with those traditions would be explained in another part of this thesis.

*The Āḻvār's compassion*

Those proficient in Tiruvāymoḻi classify the Āḻvār's suffering under three heads - i) those born of contact with prakṛti (3-2) i.e. association the body subject to Karmic bonds namely merit (puṇya) and demerit (pāpa), ii), those born of separation from God (4-7) and iii) feeling for the miseries of mankind, for while godly life is their birth right, they have moved away from God and are pursuing inferior goals and suffering in consequence (4-9). He

sympathises with the lot of those who forgetting God are caught up in untold miseries. He tries long and hard to wean them from their ways, to reform them by offering them sound advice. On their behalf, he prays to the Lord for mercy. In the opening stanza of his very first work, he sends out a petition to the Lord, not only for himself, but for all mankind. What he prays for himself, he wants others also to get. The appeal beginning with 'Yāṉceyyum Viṇṇappam' (this is my petition), ending with "Iniyāmuṟāmai" (let us not get any more) in the plural is prayer on behalf of all.[22] In the second decad of Tiruvāymoḻi there is exhortation to mankind; because he cannot bear the sight of human misery. That is evident from his words 'Kaṇṭāṟṟēn ulakiyaṟkai' (4-9-3). He is anxious that they should mend their ways and get rid of sorrow and achieve true bliss. He could not be an idle spectator; but does his best for suffering humanity. His heart goes out even to those who do not seek his help. He calls out to them saying 'Vammiṉ' (come along). "I shall be brief, listen (9-1-7)." He tries to point the way. Not content with mere general advice he lends a helping hand. He tries to impress them by pointing out his own conduct and behaviour. At the very outset of his work he speaks with feeling and tells people specifically what to do and what to refrain from doing (1-2).

What is the kind of service that godly folk are to render? Do they spend all their time in singing the glories of the Divine? The reply that Nammāḻvār gives is indeed as remarkable as it is applicable to all time. God lovers are to be found everywhere. Why? For dispelling the evils of the world. What are these evils? Vile disease, hatred, hunger and all their kind. To drive away all sorts of evils that afflict mankind, the servants of the Lord are born. They sing hymns of praise and out of the resultant joy go all over the world dancing in great delight at the thought

of God. 'Men! seek them, revere them and with pure and concentrated minds follow their ways and ennoble yourselves (5-2-6)". This is in brief Nammāḻvār's reply. How universal are his sympathies?. How noble, how compassionate his heart! what a fine world he visualizes. On an occasion he feels that his advice has been effective and he sings, "The sins of people have perished. There are none to tenant hell; and hence it has contracted. Yama's occupation is gone. Evil days are things of the past. This is certain. We see the devotees of the Lord have descended on the earth and are going about singing the Lord's glories. May this glorious state flourish! Hail!" (5-2-1).

*The holy Shrines whose paises the Āḻvār has sung*

Tirvāymoḻi which is devoted mainly for an exposition of the nature of Tattva (reality), the way (hita) and the goal (purusārtha) and to hymns, contains 28 decads which are devoted (sung) separately to deities residing in 26 different holy places. Apart from these 26 places, there are 5 other places that are referred to sporadically in other verses. Of the fivefold avatāras-Para, Vyūha, Vibhava, Antaryāmi and Arcā - the last refers to the idols of the Lord resident in temples. The songs of the Āḻvārs including the compositions of Nammāḻvār regarded as the Tamil vēda have the special aim of bringing out the greatness of Arcavatārā[23]. The author of Ācāṛya Hṛdaya explains in his inimitable way that there is unique feature in the Deity resident in each of the many holy places and a special merit in each of these spots[24]. Let us confine our attention here to the sacred places, sung by Nammāḻvār in Tiruvāymoḻi. They are thirty one divya dēsas (specially sacred places) on earth besides Paramapada and the Milky Ocean. 'Vaṭamaturai' occurs in eight verses in (9-1), while speaking about Kaṇṇan as one born in Vaṭamaturai. In one more place also (7-10-4)

this place has been mentioned. Of the remainig thirty divyadēsas, Tirukkurukūr is frequently referred to. It is his birth place. The Lord of this holy spot is glorified as the Supreme in ten stanzas (4-10). In each decad the eleventh verse is a phala struti wherein the Āḻvār refers to himself as Kurukūr Śaṭakōpan, as hailing from Kurukūr and mentions the glories of that place.

*The shouthern and northern hills*

Then in sets of two decads he describes Tiruvēṅkaṭam and Tirumāliruñcōlai (Tenmalai). Apart from these, Tiruvēṅkaṭam is referred to in eleven other places too. If we take these eleven places together with the twenty one found in decads devoted completely or wholly to Tiruvēṅkaṭam, there are thirty two places where Tirumalai figures. Thus, the number of times Tiruvēṅkaṭam is referred to is more or less equal to the number of holy places described by Nammāḻvār. Hence it would be a fair estimate if we are to say that Tiruvēṅkaṭam is a place very dear to his heart and that it finds an abiding place therein. He grows eloquent in describing it :

"Māri māṟāta taṇṇam malai (4-5-11)"

"Maṇi poṉmuttalaikkum teṉṉalaruvi (6-10-3)"

"Amarar muṉikkaṇaṅkaḷ viṟumpum (veṟpu) (6-10-10)"

"Tiṉarār mēkamenak kaḷirucērum Tiruvēṅkaṭam (6-10-5)"

The very mountain is capable of rooting out the karmas of the persons who pray to it (3-3-8), and it is praised as the prominent 'sacred mark on the forehead' (Tilaka) of the mother earth or Goddess earth (6-10-1). All the characteristics mentioned in these verses are still extant except the existence of the elephants.

Descriptions of Tirumāliruñcōlai refer to it as :

"Marulkaḷ kaṭiyum maṇimalai" (10-7-7) and it possesses

"Vaḷariḷam poḷilkaḷ," "Matitavaḷ kuṭumi" and "Maṟuvil vaṇcunaikaḷ" (2-10-1, 2 and 5).

Deer, elephants, and peacocks live in pairs on the hill. The Lord is said to reside there out of a special preference for it (2-10-3). It is referred to as the jewel adorning the southern region (10-7-4).

The stanza gives the impression that he speaks of the peak of the hill and of the garden as being the location of the temple. Today the temple stands at the foot of the hill. The verse may be interpreted that way. Both the reaching of the temple and the getting to the garden wherein the shrine stands are referred to in (2-10). That is why at the very commencement of the section, the Āḷvār says that before youth fades away, one has to hasten to this holy shrine. The suggestion is irresistible that the Āḷvār must have actually visited the two hills, one in the north (Tiruvēṅkaṭam) and the other in the South (Tirumāliruñcōlai). The expression - "Tirumāliruñcōlai ticai kaikūppic cērṉtayāṉ (10-7-3) lends support to this view.

*Kuṟuṅkuṭi and kuṭantai*

Next come Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi and Kuṭantai. It was through the blessing ot the presiding Deity of the former that the Āḷvār was born and it was the song in praise of the Lord of the latter, Ārāvamutaṉ, that led to the recovery of *Divya Prabhanda* and their codification. In addition to the ten verses devoted to each of these, there are references to these places in two other stanzas in Tiruvāymoḷi. Of the two sacred places in the Pāṇṭiya kingdom that find mention in the first hundred verses one is Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi (1-10-9), Later in (5-5) occurs a set of ten stanzas in its praise.

In the same portion, but in the eighth section Kuṭantai in the cōḻa country is referred to. The natural beauties are described in an inimitable manner by the Āḻvār. Each one of the ten stanzas makes mention of its being a good water shed or of its being the habitation of good folk. The unsurpassed loveliness of form of the Deity residing there makes an unforgettable impression in his mind. Hence even in the last section while describing the spiritual progress of souls to Paramapada, he refers to the Lord of the Kuṭantai as "our master (10-9-7)." Thus it has the unique distinction of being the holy place mentioned last in Tiruvāymoḻi. The words Ārāvamutu occur in the next and final group of stanzas also.

Out of thirteen, twelve holy places in Malaināṭu (western range) are described. Tiruvittuvakkōṭu is the only place in this region that finds no mention. Fitting descriptions of the nature of these sacred places in Malaināṭu fill the heart with delight. Among the holy spots in the Cōḻa country, besides Kuṭantai, Tiruvaraṇkam, Tiruviṇṇakar, Tirukkaṇṇapuram and Tiruppērnakar come in for laudation. Of the shrines in the Pāṇṭiyan country, in addition to Tirumāliruñcōlai and Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi, the two other places, Sīvaramaṅkalam and Tirumōkūr come in for praise. In all, twelve shrines in malaināṭu, twelve in pāṇṭiyanāṭu, five in the cōḻa country and Tiruvēṅkaṭam constitute the thirty places which the Āḻvār must have visited or they may be the shrines which he visualised mentally and praised.

A careful study of the Āḻvār's fascinating descriptions of these holy places and of the expressions used would lend strong support to the view that he must have actually visited those places and is describing them from first-hand knowledge and not merely through imagination.

It would be interesting to decide from a study of Tiruvāymoḷi itself which, among the entire holy shrines and at any rate among the twenty six shrines which get description in more than ten verses, were actually visited by the Āḻvār. Such a study seems rewarding. Whereever the Āḻvār uses the expression 'I have seen', (Kaṇṭēn) 'I have reached' (aṭaiṉtēn) or other expressions conveying a similar idea, the suggestion gets strength that he must have actually visited those places. Pursuing this clue, one finds that in the Āḻvār's descriptions of the following places, the tell-tale expressions 'Kaṇṭēn' or 'Aṭaiṉtēn' or the like figure -

1. Tirukkuṟuṅkuṭi - 'Nampiyai ṉāṉ *kaṇṭapin*' (5-5)
2. Sivaramaṅkalam - 'Kaitoḷa iruṉtāy atu ṉāṉum *kaṇṭēn*' (5-7-5)
3. Tirukkuṭaṉtai - 'Ērārkōlam tikaḷak kiṭaṉtāy *kaṇṭēn*' (5-8-1)
4. Tolaivillimaṅkalam - 'koṇṭupukku.........kaṇṭapin' (6-5)
5. Tirukkōḷūr - 'Nēriḷai *naṭaṉtāḷ*' (6-7-9)
6. Tiruvaraṅkam - '*Aṇuki aṭaiṉtanaḷ* mukil vaṇṇan aṭiyē' (7-2-10)
7. Tiruppēraiyil - 'En ṉeñcam kaṇṭatuvē *kaṇṭēn*' (7-3-7)
8. Tirucceṅkuṉṟūrttiruc ciṟṟāṟu - 'Atanuḷ *kaṇṭēnē*' (8-4-6)
9. Tiruppuliyūr - 'Mallalañcelvakkaṇṇan *tāḷaṭaiṉtāḷ*' (8-9-7)
10. Tirumōkūr - 'Nām *aṭaiṉtanamē*' (10-1-9)
11. Tiruvanaṉtapuram - '*Pukutum* iṉṟē' (10-2-1)
12. Tiruvāṭṭāṟu - 'Vāṭṭārrān ......kurai kaḷalkaḷ *kuṟukinamē*' (10-6-6)

13. Tentiruppēr – 'Aṭi *cērvatu* enakku eḷitāyinavāṟē' (10-8-3)

14. Tirumāliruñcōlai – 'Ticai kaikūppic *cērnta* yān' (10-7-3)

15. Tiruvēṅkaṭam – 'Aṭikkīḻ amarṉtu *pukuṉtēn* (6-10-10)

16. Tirukkurukūr – Birth place of the Āḻvār (4-10)

While singing the praise of Tiruppuḷinkuṭi, a village near his birth place, he entreats the Lord thus: 'How long would you lie down straining your body? Pray for our sake be pleased to sit with your noble consort, the lady of the Lotus and bless us (9-2-3).' This appeal gives us the clear impression that he went to that shrine and made this appeal before the Divine presence. Likewise, in the course of his praise of Tirukkaṇṇapuram in Cōḻaṉāṭu, he exhorts his fellowmen to go to Tirukkaṇṇapuram and adore the blessed feet of the Supreme Purusa (9-10-8). He would certainly not commend to others what he himself did not follow. Evidently, he must have visited this place too. Of the remaining eight, Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr and Tirumūḻikkaḷam in Malaiṉāṭu figure in decads, having for their subject matter the sending of emissaries to the Lord by the Āḻvār in the guise of a lady. One would send emisseries only to places which one knows personally. Hence these are also to be included in the list of sacred places actually visited by the Āḻvār.

### *Places not visited, but praised*

It is matter for doubt whether the Āḻvār could have visited the following places – Tiruvallavāḻ, Tiruvāranviḷai, Tiruk-kaṭittānam, Tirukkāṭkarai and Tiruṉāvay. It is possible that the Āḻvār visited Tiruvallavāḻ. A closer look at the relative verses may suggest this inference. The Āḻvār advises people to worship the Deity of this place and

exclaims : I dont know when I could see those blessed feet (5-9-6-7 and 9). One has to infer that his ambition was fulfilled. In all probability the other places, were not visited by the Āḻvār. "Would that I reach Tiruvāṟanviḷa and circumambulate the shrine and worship the Deity (7-10-9)" About Tiruṉāvāy, he sings "When am I to go there and feast my eyes with the sight of the Lord?" (9-8-5). "Lo, who would be fortunate to reach that place"(9-8-9). These may be taken as indicating that he did not get a chance to visit them. His desire was, perhaps not fulfilled. The verses about Tirukkaṭittānam and Tirukkāṭ karai give no clue as to whether the Āḻvār visited them or not. The same is the case with Tiruviṇṇakaram in the cōḻa country. It may be concluded that with the exception of these five the Āḻvār must have visited the other holy places.

*Āḻvār as a religious teacher and philosopher*

The Vaiṣṇava fold holds Nammaḻvār in the highest esteem as the greatest religious teacher. He is the foremost. The main factors that account for his pre - eminence among the Āḻvārs and ācāryas need now be indicated.

*Philosophical Ideas*

Tiruvāymoḻi is a superb poem which not only depicts religious aspirations of the soul and the hazards and trials in the progress of the soul to God Union but also sets forth the highest philosophical truths. The philosophy it expounds is the same as that set forth in the Sārīraka Mīmāmsaka (Brahma sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa). In the first two decads of his Tiruvāymoḻi, Nammāḻvār states with characteristic clarity the philosophy of the upanishads as summed up in the Brahma Sūtras.[25] Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyār of Kāñcīpuram has in his numerous articles and booklets stated that Ramanuja composed his Sri Bhāsya on the Brahma Sūtra in a unique manner excelling all other commentators mainly because of

the inspiration that came from his knowledge of Āḻvārs› Aruḷicceyal, especially Tiruvāymoḻi.[26] In the latter portions of Tiruvāymoḻi (8-8) (10-7-10) and (10-10) also one finds, the explanation of philosophical ideas to a larger extent than in any other Tamil work of this period.

Secondly singing the glories of God is one of the main features of devotional poetry. Nammāḻvār begins his first lines in Tiruvāymoḻi, thus:

'Uyarvaṟa Uyarnala muṭaiyavaṉ evaṉ avaṉ'

"He who is endowed with all the good and auspicious qualities which make him second to none."

The commentator points out that the Āḻvār in this very first line disproves effectively those philosophers who say that God has no qualities, i. e. 'Nirguṇa.' Abundance of love, superiority, being the cause of all the worlds, pervading all things animate and inanimate, being the Lord of all, capable of giving refuge to all, All powerfulness, loving of goodness (Satyakāmatvam), helping Jīvas in their desolation and removing all their sins and sorrows and easy accessibility to all and such other qualities are elaborately praised in the verses of Tiruvāymoḻi.[27] There can be no genuine religion on any other basis. But for this, how the devotess of God would spend their time and energy? The beauty of His form and His noble deeds done in various avatāras find place in their prayers and hymns. By mentioning the qualities of God and his boundless mercy shown on human beings especially on himself, the Āḻvār exhorts his mind to bow down at his feet and get release. He establishes the existence of God beyond doubt in various ways and also tells us that the relationship between God and Jīvas is like that of soul and body (1-1-7).

*Preachings*

His main preachings may be summed up briefly thus: "God is easily accessible to his devotees (1-3-1). One

should fix his mind on only one God (1-3-7). God does not require any return from his devotees (1-6-11). Not only the experience, even the approach is a lovable one (1-7). One should begin to go to Him even in his prime of youth, when he is energetic enough to do all sorts of deeds (2-10-1). The beauty of the Lord is of a captivative nature. Mere mention of His name will cause the destruction of all sins (3-3-9). The only thing attainable by human beings is to get at Him and do all sorts of helpful deeds (servitudes) to Him (3-3-1).

There is no difference of status or learning among the devotees of Lord. One whose devotion to God is much should be considered great (3-7).

Life in the world is not permanent (4-1-6). Riches are also not of long standing (4-1-1 and 3). Even the experience of the soul-self realisation is a limited one (4-1-10). So one should assiduously cultivate the habit of praying to the lotus feet of God (Kaṇṇan) (4-1-11). That is the only way to the good life

The Āḻvār emphasises not only reaching the feet of the Lord but also the joy of mingling with the devotees of God (8-10-7). He even considers one who is in the lower cadre if he is a devotee of God, as his superior (8-10-10). He surrenders himself at the feet of God and seeks refuge in Him (10-1-6). He exhorts people to pray to God with a willing heart offering sweet smelling flowers, lights or incense or merely pure water (10-2-5).

### *The Essence*

Thus one finds the Āḻvār emphasising pure devotion to God and surrender of one's self to God as the only way to get at Him. The ideas of the Āḻvār can be summed up

like this: The Āḷvār believed in (a) the transitory of all worldly pleasures (b) the permanence of bliss attained on emancipation (c) the cessation of worldly miseries on the attainment of communion with the supreme (d) self surrender as the means to the divine communion and (e) the eligibility of all to the cult of devotion.[28]

The Āḷvār says that he did not give alms to deserving persons, did not even help what little he can, nor even forgo his own comforts, nor thought it his duty to offer prayers daily with flowers. But he aspires to reach the Lord wielding the disc (4-7-9). He mentions here in this verse the three ways that will lead one towards God., viz., Karmayōga, ñāna yōga and Bhakti yōga. He did not perform any one of these yogas. Yet he desires to attain Him. By this he makes known to us that these different ways need not be the causes for attaining Him. In an earlier verse in the same decad he requests Lord to come towards them so that they can offer flowers at His feet brought from far and near and sing and dance with joy (4-7-8). By this it is evident that offering flowers and singing and dancing have to be done by a Devotee not as a means to attain Him but merely as an outlet for his boundless joy for Him. The Lord's unsurpassed joy is a spontaneous one and it is poured on devotees only on account of His free will. It is evident from the followiog statement also.

'Veṟitē aruḷ ceyvār ceyārkaṭku ukaṉtu' (8-7-8)

While speaking about God, the Āḷvār says that all the worlds repose in Him, and He dwells in them (9-6-4). And God's loving grace flows towards him in a more intensive way than his own yearning for Him (9-6-10).

In the end, the Āḷvār describes how the devotees are led to Vaikuṉta, the sacred abode of God with pomp and oy (10-9).

CHAPTER II

# NAMMĀLVĀR ON THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF POETRY

Poetry has been defined in various ways by different people; but none of these gives a complete account of poetry. Good poetry combines in itself the different aspects referred to individually in the different definitions. Keble, the French critic thinks that poetry furnishes an outlet for emotions that overflow or provides full scope for unimpeded imagination to run its course[1]. "Something speaks in me; and I commit it to writing" says Milton[2]. Ben Jonson is of the view that philosophical investigation is pretty hard; but poetry presents philosophical truths in pleasant terms in entrancing music[3]. Let poetry spring up or grow as leaves grow on a tree; what does not grow in the fashion is not true Poetry. As the foetus grows in the womb, as smell emanates from the flower, as illumination radiates from a lamp, poetry must emerge naturally, says John Keats[4].

All the features referred to singly in these varied statements are found tagether in Tiruvāymoḻi, which the Āḻvār himself characterises as 'the faultless thousand' "Titilātaṉ tamiḻkaḷ āyiramum", (9-1-11) of Māṟan Śaṭakōpan. His references to his thousand stanzas as 'Niralniṟai' (1-1-11), 'Cīrttoṭai' (1-2-11), and 'aḷaviyanṟa aṉtāti' (1-4-11), reveal that his aim was to cast the poem in the form of an aṉtāti conforming strict metrical standards. It is also evident that he wanted them

to be expressed in sweet melody, from his own description such as 'Collicai mālai' (4-8-11) and 'Paṉkaḷāyiram' (6-1-11). Proceeding from his intense devotion to God, the work is intended as a song offering to God. This is indicated by his references to his work as 'Vēṭkaiyāl coṉṉa pāṭal' (4-10-11), and 'Paṉicey āyiram' (1-10-11). His aim was that it should be in faultless Tamil and that it should setforth truth is also explicit from his own words "Vaḻuvilā oṇtamiḻ" (4-7-11) and 'Poyyil pāṭal' (4-3-11). 'Nāviyal Pāṭal' (9-2-11) indicates that the work issued forth spontaneously and without any effort on his part. That is why he says that he did not himself compose the poem, but that the Lord (Namperumāṉ), who is working through his mind is the real author, who, however, made it appear that the Āḻvār composed the work. (Vide "Iruṉtamiḻnūl ivaimoḻiṉtu" (10-6-4).

*The authorship of Tiruvāymoḻi*

Again and again the Āḻvār repeats this idea. At the very outset he stated that God, the Lord of the celestials, conferred upon him wisdom and devotion, but that He did not take him unto Himself, perhaps for the reason that He had chosen the Āḻvār as the medium for revealing His songs about Himself. When there are so many poets much greater than himself, it was his good fortune that the Lord chose him for the purpose of revealing a work about Himself unrivalled in thought and expression (7-9-6). In all these places he invariably refers to the work as 'Iṉkavi' (sweet poem) 'Vaṇṭiṉkavi' (7-9-7) and 'Pataviya iṉkavi' (7-9-10.) Though devoid of ñāna and ability to sing the glories of God, his unworthy nature was transformed and he was turned into an ardent devotee of God and made to sing world famous songs as the author of the exquisite Tiruvāymoḻi, the true author thereof being in reality God (7-9-5).

He feels intensely for his inability to offer anything at the alter of God as a token of his gratitude for the greatness thrust on him (7-9-10).

Here a doubt may arise: whether Śaṭakōpa or God was the poet, the author. The Āḷvār himself furhishes an answer to this query. "Apparently it is a beautiful poem composed by me in my own words; but in reality, the great wonder worker praised Himself by His own words 'Ta<u>n</u> collāl tā<u>n</u> ta<u>nn</u>aippukaḷntu Koṇṭavan,' Māyavan (7-9-2 and 10-7-5)." The Āḷvār was merely a tool, an instrument. Then, how was the instrument used and the great poem composed? What the commentator says in this context is interesting. "God gave the songa first and the Āḷvār followed Him. Had the Lord composed it, this work, like the Bhagavad Gīta, would have lacked interest and been dry and it would not be great and worthy of praise. God is accustomed to acting in this wise. He himself created the world; but made it appear that Brahma created it. He himself burnt up Tripura (the triple city) but fathered it on Siva; Similarly, He composed the Tiruvāymoḷi and made it appear that the Āḷvār composed it and gave him the entire credit for it."

But in (7-9-3), the Āḷvār uses words that convey a two fold meaning, one is that He was chosen as the foremost person fit to reform the world, and the other that he was given the clear conviction that God is the ultimate Reality, the absolute *prius*. Then he came to reside in his tongue and enabled him to compose a beautiful poem for the edification of bhaktas (devotees of God), Accounts of great poets like Kampar, Kāḷidāsa and Vālmīki are replete with stories of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, residing in their tongue (speech) and investing them with poetic gifts. But here God Himself is said to have entered into the Āḷvār and composed the divine poem. Some may raise

the question whether such a thing is at all likely. It is certainly a legitimate doubt.

we may try to find an answer to this with the help of Tiruvāymoḷi itself. In (8-10-5) the Āḷvar says that the bliss of the Lord's feet cannot be equal to the bliss arising from singing, along with devotees of the Lord, the praises of God. The idea is set forth that though born in the body which marks the depths of degradation, to be able to comprehend the infinite perfections of the Lord, and to experience the resulting joy and to give expression to this overflowing experience of delight in words is indeed, the nectar of great poetry. Does this not fit in with what Keble and John Keats have expressed? What Milton means when he says "Something speaks in me and I commit it to writing" is something similar. Blake, the greatest of English mystic poets, writes "that the Lord used him as an instrument for revealing great truths and that he himself did not (create) compose them".[5] "Really creative poetry must spring in a moment of inspiration: what does not take birth in that fashion cannot be a great work. What is composed under inspiration must mean what is divinely inspired, the gift of God "Writes R. S. Desikan".[6] He adds "Though ideas are born in moments of inspiration, it is beyond doubt that human effort is essential in order to give them appropriate form". From this it would follow that we could consider the poet, the Āḷvār, responsible for the outward form or setting given to idea. If ideas, feelings and insight are given by God it may not be difficult to furnish them with the external setting.

Croce, the great Italian philosopher and critic, says that the inner light focussed on words is art.[7] 'If the light of truth is kindled in the mind, it would illumine words',[8] says poet Bārati. Thus it is clear that if deep insight

arises in the mind it is bound to find suitable expression in words That is why the Āḻvār speaks appropriately of 'Moḻipaṭṭōṭum kaviyamutam' (the nectar of poetry moves forth with appropriate embodiment in language (8–10–5). Again the expression 'Nāviyal pāṭal' (9–2–11), meaning what is sung without the intervention of mind, stresses the same idea, namely that when insight and feeling are profound they express themselves effortlessly in appropriate garb.

## *How Composed*

If we raise the question In what sense is God the cause of this composition? The answer is that the Lord showed His luminous form to the Āḻvār and made him compose the poem. 'Ātiyāy ṉinṟa cōtiyai' (7–9–1). As mentioned already, it was not merely a knowledge of the Lord's excellence but also the vision of His matchless Divine form and unrivalled luminosity that inspired him to compose Tiruvāymoḻi. Just as the sight of intense suffering that moved Vālmīki to compose the Rāmāyaṇa, the Āḻvār's vision of the Divine form that inspired him to compose the poem. Understand Vyāsa, also known as Kṛiṣṇa Dvaipāyana, to be no other than Lord Nārayaṇa; who else except Kṛiṣṇa with lotus like eyes, could have composed the Mahābhārata? asks Viṣṇupurāṇa[9] (3–4–4). Similarly in this case also, the Lord himself is the real author of Tiruvāymoḻi. It is usual to call the effortless and natural flow of poetry inspired by true knowledge and absorption in real beauty as divinely caused. With great appropriateness it is described as natural, spontaneous. That is how we are to understand it. That is precisely the reason why Wordsworth observes that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[10]

'The poets who wrote the wonderful poems which we appreciate most have not achieved that distinction merely

as a result of conscious effort and struggle through intellectual understanding and adherence to rules of prosody. In a moment of illumination words come rushing to their minds. Some unseen, mystic force seems to control them", says Poet Tagore. How well this description fits in the Āḻvār's compositions! Is this not an adequate answer to the doubt raised at the commencement of this section? It is this mysterious sakti that the Āḻvār also refers to. The Lord resident at Tirumāliruñcōlai, the deceitful Thief! the great Māyan! came as a cunning poet. mingled with my mind and soul, and in a manner, which nobody could understand consumed my mind and soul, and became everything and filled me completely, says the Āḻvār (10-7-1). He is to me honey. milk, sugarcane and nectar – all in one and without any distinction of himself and myself' He praised himself (10-7-2), not only that, He addressed poets as "sweet poets! in your experience of divine beauty you would lose yourselves. Therefore, without his beauty and excellences melting you, protect yourselves and serve Him". From this it is evident that He is the proper subject of poetry and that it is the duty of poets to experience His beauty and guṇās and sing His glories.

In one place (3-8-6) the Āḻvār says that his prāṇa or soul hungers to experience with its ears the delight of listening to the poetry of delicious fruit, a form given to the glories of Lord, blended with the sweet honey of delectable music suited to the occasion. From this it is clear that in the Āḻvār's conception, the proper theme for good poetry is the glory of God; and it is like the ripe fruit and that even as honey adding to the taste of fruit, proper music enhances the appeal of poetry.

*Advice to poets*

A whole sub-section (3-9) is devoted to reminding poets of their duties and responsibilities. From that it is clear what according to the Āḻvār is the fit object of poetry and why it should be so. The manner in which this instruction is conveyed is worthy of notice for its quick movement and sweet reasonableness. Incidentally, we get a glimpse into the points of similarity and contrast between the Āḻvār and the poets of previous epochs and appreciate the contrast.

The Āḻvār takes justifiable pride in calling himself 'the poet of the creator of the world, (3-9-10); and he asserts categorically that he cannot bring himself to praising men 'Māniṭam pāṭavaṉta kavi allēn' (3-9-9). That is what differentiates him from most of the poets that were his contemporaries and also those earlier. He raises the question that how could he give his assent for the poetry of others? If we ask him what has poesy meant for him and what is the result that flows from poetry, his reply is contained in the following stanza :-

Cāykoṇṭa immaiyum catittu vāṉavar ṉāṭṭaiyum
ṉīkaṇṭu koḷenṟu viṭum tarum ṉinṟu ṉinṟē (3-9-9).

Poetry offers not only the bright, attractive pleasures of this world, but also the bliss of paramapada in the company of ṉityasūris and the supreme felicity of eternal kaiṅkarya (service) to the Lord. Rightly employed, poetry offers all these. "If a poet comes into being, he communicates to the world something which has not been said before, and that with a clarion call. Rhyme and metre alone do not constitute poetry. A new idea or thought arises; it gets an appropriate form, opens up a new vista of experience to the world"[12], says Emerson. Similarly Śaṭakōpa does not

walk the routine path, follow in the foot steps of previous poets, but chalks out a new path for himself. Though he conforms to many an ancient literary tradition, he never fails to emphasise clearly and sharply the new modes he has fashioned for himself. These are discernible in his advice to poets.

He is aware that what he says would hardly be palatable to them, nonetheless he does not shrink from his duty and tells them what he conceives to be their office and function.

'Connāl virōtamitu ākilum Colluvan kēṇminō' (3-9-1). Instead of telling them straightaway that they are to do such and such things, he begins his remarks with the statement that he would do only such and such a thing and not any other thing, so that his advice may become acceptable and seem reasonable. The advice starts with the observation that his tongue would refuse to sing the praises of any one except the Lord of Tiruvēṅkaṭam where bees under the influence of honey are humming all the time. Next, he indicates what is prohibited. What is there that could be achieved by extolling men? 'Unrelated to the highest Reality, the supreme person, none of the innumerable entities of the world could be said to exist[13]. When that is so, in disregard of Him, to think of a mortal as one immortal and, on top of it, to look upon his riches as even more important and try to attain them by extolling the greatness of men is the height of folly. To praise men would really amount to establishing their defects and deficiencies.

Addressing poets thus 'Learned people! leaving out the Lord of the celestial beings who alone can bestow lasting riches, blessedness, for whose benefit do you employ your poetic talents by descending to the level of gloriyfing little

folk? It does not benefit them; nor could it benefit you and it is scarcely consistent with your learning it is sure to lower the prestige of poetry itself Why then do you descend to this level?' he asks. The Āḻvār's conception of the high office and function of poetry and the great esteem in which he holds true poets are evident from this.

Next, the Āḻvār draws attention to the distinction between men and God and exposes the futility of praising men. Even if some little benefits were to issue from it, the patrons themselves are impermanent; while on the contrary the Lord has resolved to shower his bounteous gifts on poets; and he makes them perfect like himself; and he would free them from the necessity of having to eke out a miserable existence by praising mortals and grant them liberation from bondage to samsāra (3-9-4). Thus the contrasting pictures of the two states - that of glorifying men and that of praising the glories of God - are presented. It is vain praising men their riches and fame are no better than garbage pile. In flattering men, poets find that the first casuality is their truthfulness While, on the other hand, if they praise God, the outcome is limitless bliss. He is the abode of all true wealth and glory and is the inexhaustible source of excellences. He could grant whatever the devotee seeks. Therefore, the Āḻvār invites all poets to gather and praise the Lord who is faultless in his gifts, to praise Him, the Beautiful Lord who in his own experience has been matchless in his benefactions. The Lord's inexhaustible glory and resources and His unforgettable beauty of form are the only proper themes for great poetry.

He tells poets who eke out a living by praising men that it is unbecoming of them and that it would be far more dignified if they made a living by hard toil. Perhaps this advice to fellow poets by a God - inspired poet that they should seek to live by the sweat of their brow is

something revolutionary considering the times (3-9-6 ; May be it was far in advance of his time. In any event, it is a matter for doubt if in his own time or in an earlier epoch there was one who had the courage to place before them such sound advice. One may say that there was none who put it so clearly and so emphatically.

If poets were to say that they would seek to live only by praising, the Āḻvar says clearly that there is among men none endowed with riches to be able to give, and that whoever be the God that is praised all praises are really praises of the supreme Lord, who stands as all things and as all beings and who shines forth in his unique glory as the consort of Laksmi. Thus, the Āḻvār demonstrates to poets the supremacy of Tirumāl. The manner in which, without disparaging any of the istadēvatās, the Āḻvār establishes the paratva (ultimacy) of Srīman Nārāyana is something unique and dignified.

Then he shows that for his part he could only sing the glories of the greatest benefactor whose fame is limitless and whose names are not two or three but a thousand and who is the only object worthy of praise. Exposing the utter futility of the ways of other poets, he says that to praise such finite beings is to resort to manifest lies and he won't be a party for it. In conclusion, he says that even if he wishes to praise men, his organ of speech would refuse to do so and that his mind would not be a party to such an act. No wonder 'the poet of the creator of the world' expresses such a view so categorically Hence this decad is of special value.

*What is great Poetry*

Only when we have some idea of the nature of Tamil poetry that existed prior to the Āḻvār's time we could form

a correct estimate of the value of Śaṭakōpa's compositions. The caṅkam period is the heyday of Tamil literature. Scholars are of the opinion that as it was an age when the Tamils had not much contact with other races, the literature of this period reflects the culture of the Tamils in a comparative state of purity, and it compares favourably with the great literatures of the world. The *Puṟapporuḷ* part of that literature consists for the most part of praises by poets of princes and other patrons of learning. The poets of that period enjoyed great reputation and were held in high esteem; they would not design to flatter men for traits which they did not possess. But in later times the situation changed greatly.

It is evident that the Āḻvār has little regard for a life of flattery; he really valued the attainment of true knowledge of God and service of the Divine through mind, senses and body (through thought, word and deed). Therefore, the Āḻvār who sought to reform mankind from out of his boundless love, strove to teach them through his songs. Naturally he had a high appreciation of the function and power of poetry. It is only appropriate that he hastened to teach them their duty. From what has been said it is clear that the Āḻvār, a great poet, considers that poetry should be employed to describe the glories of God and that to use it to applaud men is to debase it.

The Āḻvār flourished in an age when Vaiṣṇavism and Saivism were a power in the land. Religious duties and practices were then regarded as of supreme importance. Nammāḻvār, an inspired poet, lent special support to that way of thought and belief. To a certain extent, Suṉtarar, one of the Saiva samayācāryas, expressed himself against using poetry as a means for securing material advantages for success in worldy life. But even he does not speak out so categorically and strongly as Nammāḻvār does.

Among the vaiṣṇava poets the first three Āḻvārs, Tirumaḻicai Āḻvār and the great poetess Āṇṭāl may be said to belong to this type.

The special mark of a great poet is that he chalks out a new line for himself. Of the new features of his poetry, one is a firm resolve not to praise men and another is the insistance that great poetry consists in singing the glories of the adorable Lord. These are the negative and the positive aspects of the same ideal.

Here a question may be raised; Maturakavi Aḻvār had one pointed devotion to Nammāḻvār and spent all his time in prayerful worship of the Āḻvār, singing devoutly his compositions. He knew on God other than Nammāḻvār. If he had spoken about God that was done in the belief that it would please his guru Nammāḻvār. What a contradiction say some. But a reference to Maturakavi's work would reveal that the truth is quite different and that the contradiction is only apparent. Nammāḻvār thought that poetry should not be debased by praising men; for it is labour wholly lost. Maturakavi did sing the praises of God; and his God was no other than Nammāḻvār, Kurukūr nampi. Hence his reference to 'pāvin innicai pāṭittirivan'.[14]

"Don't compose songs for the sake of Gold (for money)"[15] says Boileau a French poet and critic. "From my writings, I do not look for either wealth or fame, for me poetry is its own reward; it dispels my sorrow, enhances my joys"[16] says Coleridge. Nammāḻvār and Maturakavi followed the same principle. Thus, it follows that Nammāḻvār is a far sighted poet who engaged himself in practising the art of poetry with absolutely no interest in the triad of fame, wealth and praise.[17]

CHAPTER III

# THE TRADITION OF LYRICAL POETRY IN TAMIL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AKATTINAI

"When I first studied (through English translations) specimens of the oldest literature of Tamil, viz the Caṅkam literature, I was struck with wonder by the novelty presented by it *vis-a-vis* that of Sanskrit and other Indian literatures (which belong frankly to the atmosphere or orbit of Sanskrit). The treatment of love as it was elaborated in the earliest Tamil writings on which the prescriptions given in Tolkāppiyam were based, seemed to me to present something quite novel and something independent of the Pan-Indian Sanskrit background" observed the renowned scholar Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, in his lectures at the Annamalai University[1]. Poems dealing with love, Akam Poetry are said to constitute a unique and an important section of Tamil literature. Nammāḻvār is esteemed as a very great poet who expounded the vedic teachings in Tamil having been blessed with the Divine wisdom through the grace of the Lord. In a study of his poetic art, it is essential, indeed very necessary, to consider the place he assigns to love lyrics How far he has followed the traditions of lyrical poetry in his works and whether this has enhanced or detracted from the value of his poetry may be discussed.

## *(A) General principles*

Merits of Lyric poetry : "There are no sentiments higher than love and valour. One indeed feels justifiable

pride that the Tamil language has two great literatures devoted to these two sentiments. Of these sentiments, valour pertains to the relation among men; but as love involves relation among the sexes, literary critics have commended lyrical poetry as it provides greater scope for graphic representation, imaginative insight and aesthetic enjoyment. Hence they gave a higher place to love than to valour. It is in line with this view that Tiruvaḷḷuvar must have, it is believed, treated of the forms of love in accordance with the principles governing love lyrics[2]". Further, "it is because the Āḻvārs and the Saiva saints to whom we owe our precious heritage of devotional songs adapted in their compositions the language of sex - love with which the world is familiar and followed the literary conventions prescribed for love lyrics, it is because they revitalised the world of literature with love of God, that the domain of Tamil devotional songs flourish with new radiance and special grandeur[3]". So much as a general truth. But in particular, Nammāḻvār is entitled to a position of pre-eminence by his special contributions to this field. A good part of *Tiruviruttam* and about a fourth of *Tiruvāymoḻi* come under the category of Akapporuḷ. Before discussing their structure and special features, it is well to consider whether these songs composed by the Āḻvār assuming the guise of a lady could properly be ranked as Akapporuḷ.

### *What is akam*

Akam signifies sex love. It has mental harmony and physical union as its components. Akapporuḷ is physical union born of mental union or mental harmonary accompanying physical union[4]." It is said that from this point of view the Āḻvār's compositions in a state when he imagines himself to be a lady cannot truly be considered

Akapporuḷ. For, it may be pointed out that this does not involve any physical union. Dr. V. S. P. Manickam who has made a deep study of Akapporuḷ literature observes "Aṇṭāḷ's love cannot be Akapporuḷ, as it does not involve physical relationship; nor is Mārutavēkan's union with Sutamati akapporuḷ, as it lacks mental concord[5]".

*Love poetry and religious songs*

It is not necessary for our present purpose to discuss the learned professor's views at length. What he says may be true of Caṅkam literature. But with the march of time, it is needless to insist that in subsequent times and under changed conditions literary productions should be moulded after the same old pattern without any deviation. If there be certain indispensable aspects, they have certainly to be adopted.

"When Akapporuḷ talks of marriage through mutual love and consent of the bride and bridegroom, the parents having no hand in bringing it about, it is not a mode initiated by the fancy of the poet, but a representation by the poet of what prevailed in society[6]". Even so in an age of religious revival, communion with the Deity, standing by and rendering service, was regarded by religious leaders as the source of infinite joy, as the fulfilment of desire[7], entire and complete. There could be nothing improper in looking upon the inward realisation, mental comprehension of God and then seeing Him face to face and holding communion with Him as the two phases corresponding to the two aspects of akapporuḷ. That is the reason why these devotional songs came to be composed with the same,- nay greater-emotional fervour and intensity.

The Kāvyas describe the amorous life of famous persons giving their names. The course of their sex life is

presented in all its ramifications in a continuous narrative. But such characteristics are not found in the compositions of the Āḻvārs. The sex lyrics have been defined as follows:

"நிரல்படப் புணையாமை அகப்பொருள் முறை;
பெயர்படப் புணையாமை அகப்பாட்டு முறை"[8]

The Āḻvār's songs do not confirm to this; how then could they be treated as love lyrics?

Before answering this question, it is necessary to ascertain why the names of specific individuals are not mentioned in these poems. The experiences described in Akappāṭal are not special to any one individual, but are common to the whole of mankind.[9] Mostly the state of mind of the heroine under the spell of love is the theme. But the name of the heroine is nowhere mentioned, but the name of lover (God) to whom she has lost her mind is mentioned; God is a unitary Being; but the souls expressing God-love are many; hence their names are not referred to, only that of God finds mention in these poems. Although they do not conform wholly to the definition of love lyrics, they fit in with the spirit of the definition. Further, in Akapporuḷ songs the use of names indicating the type of region (Tiṇai) from which the hero hails are not debarred or prevented. The proper name only should not be used; but the names of the Lord used in religious poems are like the general names formed on the basis of regions or occupations and they convey some meaning. If we consider that way then second objection will be met with.

Professor A. S. Ñānasambaṉdam says "The elegys – kaiyaṟuṉilaippāṭal exhibit a depth and a feeling that touches the heartfeatures not found in puṟam poetry. As these spring from the overflow of the felt experience of the poets and are the spontaneous expression of the feeling that wells from within, there is nothing wrong in classifying them as Akapporuḷ

songs. For they are the inner experiences of individual persons."[10] As the learned professor says, all these devotional syngs that are cast in the manner of akapporuḷ may be grouped under Akapporuḷ poetry and there is no harm in it. The reason for not including them in this category can only be the mention of the name of the lover. As there could be no harm if this rule is relaxed in respect of these hymns; this need not be strictly insisted upon and these could be classed as Akapporul. Else it may be conceded that these poems partake of the characteristics of Akapporul.

## *Necessity to recognise the possibility of growth and progress*

"Mental harmony among lovers is the life centre of Akapporuḷ. This harmony is called union of mind (uḷḷappuṇarcci) in technical parlance[11]. 'Uḷḷattāl vēṭkai cellinum meyyuṟṟārāyiṟṟu' says the commentator of Iṟaiyanār Akapporuḷ[12]. Although there is no physical union on the second day meeting of the lovers. ie. iṭaṉtalaippāṭu, it is also considered by lovers as union signifying or causing great joy. The joy that results from union arising from sex urge may be important (special); but can't such a state of happiness be obtained through companionship with and devoted service to the loved one? The rituals (Karaṇam) that Tolkāppiyar assigns for marriage have changed from age to age. Like-wise the attitude to physical union could be regarded as changing with the mental attitude of the lovers. There could obviously be no difficulty in accepting such a position.

## *Elements in common between Āḻvār's songs and Akappāṭṭu*

In separation and suffering we notice the strength and beauty of literature. Pleasure in the tragic is a source of

excellence in poetry and to the reader. That is why the great Caṅkam poets seeking pleasure in this mode of poetry composed songs which deal with separation of lovers· Two thirds of the songs on the theme of Kaṟpu deal with separation only.[13] Likewise the songs of Nammāḻvār deal for the most part with the pangs of separation. Except one batch of ten satanzas, all others dealing with God-love depict the distress of separation. That is why in these songs we clearly notice the depth and intensity of feeling characteristic of Akapporuḷ. In Akattiṇai only the lady occupies the prominent place.[14] Like-wise the Aḻvār's Akapporuḷ songs comorise exclusively of the utterances of companions, mother and heroine. There is no section in Tiruvāymoḻi where the hero directly expresses his thoughts and feelings. Nature is presented in Caṅkam literature as a factor that helps people's actions and conduct.[15] Similarly in the Āḻvār's works also conformably to his religious view of the real, nature is conceived as friendly to man. When the Āḻvār feels miserable at separation he seems to find nature also feeling miserable from a like separation; and when he feels the joy of union nature seems to him to reciprocate his joy. Whenever he is anxious to serve God, nature too seems to him to be engaged in service (All this would be explained in the section devoted to Nature). Thus our ancients prescribed some standards (procedures) for the fruitful delineation of what is universal in human nature (sex love); it is to be appreciated how in a like manner, in the middle period-poets set a new pattern, of course on the basis of love poetry, for the most effective representation of what they considered an indispensable mode of human thought and feeling (love of God).

*Is akappatal (Love lyric) something derogatory?*

The fourth subsection of the first centum sets forth how the Āḻvār gets into the state of mind of a nāyaki,

feels the pangs of separtion unbearable and sends some birds as emissaries to her Lord. The story is told of a person, attending a discourse on Tiruvāymoḻi as he listened to the explanation of this section felt like getting away from it on the score that it seemed to be the action of a sensualist. This shows that there are also people who consider the intrusion of the sentiment of love in Tiruvāymoḻi as detracting from its values. But clearly this view is based on a failure to recognise the difference between worldly love (Viṣaya-Kāma) and God-love (Bhagavat-Kāma). The implication is, worldly love is inferior and God love superior. If that be so, the question arises, why does the Āḻvār describe loving devotion to God in terms of worldly love. The answer is love is what is universal, what everybody understands and experiences; and it would be effective to start from the universal, the widely known and lead the listener on to God-love which is infinitely superior, lasting and truly blissful. This is like giving sugar coated pills to one who refuses to take in bitter medicine in order to cure him of his malady[16]. Viewed from the point of view of the learner this may be quite right. But then, it would imply that he composed his works solely for others (i.e. for public consumption). In other words, it would imply that in order to invest external attractions and poetic glamour, the Āḻvār has made use of the lyrical form (Akapporuḷ). But that is only part of the story; a partial truth and not the whole truth. A parallel instance may be cited. The poet of Kāliṅkattupparaṇi, which is primarily concerned with the sentiment of heroism (*vīra rasa*) realised perhaps that representation of heroism by itself would fall flat and hence imported into the work a love scene called 'Kaṭaitiṟappu' in order to lend some interest to the narrative.

### *The special significance of casting the poem in the Akapporuḷ mode*

If the reason for the use of Akapporuḷ songs was mainly that of attracting the attention of readers, the Āḻvār would have cast the entire work in that form; but he has not done so. An explanation for this must be sought. The Aḻvār sings in his own state; and sometimes in that of a nāyaki. He does not assume the role of a lady; nor is he merely acting that part. What then is the real situation? when the feeling that wells from within grows in intensity, it must be taken that he becomes a woman. When he is himself, when he is self conscious, he is in the state of ñāna; in his state as a nāyaki (bride), it is feeling that is dominant; it is the state of bhakti or prēma. He speeks in these two states. In ñānā, he speaks; in prēma, the bride or the woman speaks[17]. In the state of ñāna, when he is himself he expounds the nature of the tattvas (categories, reality); when the emotion of love dominates, he becomes a woman and uses the language of love, of devotion and sings accordingly. One is the state of ñāna and the other, that of feeling or emotion. Every individual needs both Ñāna and feeling. The lyrical mode (akappāṭal) is best fitted to express the emotions. It has helped the Āḻvār to a great extent. When feeling is uppermost, he naturally gets into the state of mind of a woman, actually gets the mentality of a nāyaki. That is the truth of the matter. His utterances in the natural state is in the state of ñāna, expounds the highest truths of philosophy and religion in lucid and dignified Tamil. When feelings are on the ascendent, he uses the lyrical mode and gets to the summit of (farthest limits of) bhakti. What an expression of doubt, despondency, despair, inconsolabie sorrow and of uncontrollable rush of feeling! That such impassioned poetry is not emotional orgy but, beneath the surface,

expresses the highest philosophic truths is convincingly explained by the proficients in the *Divyaprabandas.* It is indeed a marvel of poetic achievement that Nammāḻvār succeeds in conveying such a wealth of meaning in his compositions.

*Elements in common between Viṣṇavism and akapporuḷ*

(1) Getting into the mood of the nāyaki: The religious literatures of the world express the relation of God to souls as of various kinds. A powerful one among those is that of the relation between the bridegroom and bride (ṉāyaka ṉāyaki bhāva). Vaiṣṇavism gives an important place to this conception. The Supreme Soul is Purusōttama, the supreme Person; he is the only male principle. Before him all other souls are brides. This important Vaiṣṇava conception comes in handy for Nammāḷvār, the foremost leader of Vaiṣṇavites; he could take his stand on this and use akapporuḷ modes quite effectively and most appropriately. "The devotee who is an expert in bridal mysticism considers himself or herself to be the bride of God. In fact, according to the philosophy behind this attitude, God is the only Male and all the souls are His Consorts."[18] The union of the soul and God is likened in the Sanskrit vedas to the mixing of pure water with pure water.[19] The blending of the souls is aptly compared in the upanisads to the state or mind of a person who, embraced by a loving and devoted wife, is so wholly absorbed in that ineffable experience that he is not aware of the inner and the outer world.[20] There are adepts in bhaktimārga (the proficients in bhakti) who maintain that unless one gets into the attitude of a bride, he cannot find a shelter for himself in the blessed feet of the Lord.[21]

In conformity to that tradition, Tiruvāymoḷi shines forth as a rare work containing within it the finest utterances

of the Āḻvār in varied states, as the bride, her mother and also her companions. There have been poets who have conveyed their thoughts as the nāyaki or the nāyakā. But there are hardly any works which express the mental attitude of the nāyaki as seen by her mother, and by the bride's companions. This is a unique feature of Tiruvāymoḻi. The special features of each of these two ways of looking at the bride would be explained in the relevant section later.

## *Natural union (Iyaṟkaippuṇarcci)*

The five modes of love - relationship recognised in the Tamil cultural tradition, include *Kaḷavu* and *Kaṟpu*. The first of these namely *Kaḷavu* has four progressive steps namely *iyaṟkaippuṇarcci, iṭaṉtalaip pātu, pāṅkaṟ* kūṭṭam and *tōḻiyiṟ-kūṭṭam*. The first of these denotes the meeting–a result of past good deeds–of a woman and a man, both of proper age, feeling drawn to each other at first sight. Their minds unite, later, there may be physical union. "Countless men and women meet every day on the road or in groves. They happen to see one another; having seen, one man feels attracted to some one woman; a certain woman turns her affectionate eye upon some man; in this drama of life why a person loves particular individual leaving out all others, is a mystery that remains inexplicable".[22]

Tolkāppiyar speaks of this as the natural consequence of people's prior deeds (karma).[23] The commentator says that it is the karma of the individual that invests the very first sight on the first day itself, or one of several sights on a later occasion with a special significance. This is generally known as *iyaṟkaippuṇarcci*, natural bond of affection.

At the very outset, the Lord was pleased to confer on the Āḻvār knowledge of the nature of bhakti (matiṉalam). Knowledge and love of God was granted; an attitude of mind that delighted in serving the Lord and worshipping Him was implanted in the Āḻvār. What is the cause of this selection? None can answer this No reason can be assigned for the Lord choosing the Āḻvār from among countless people in the world, for this special favour. It is beyond the ken of human investigation, says the author of "*Ācāryahṛdayam*".[24] The case of first love and the choice of the Āḻvār seem to be analogous cases. In other words why people love at first sight and why the Āḻvār was chosen for special favour are both inexplicable.

*Pāṅkaṟkūṭṭam*

When a hero is enabled to join his lady-love with the help of his intimate friend, it is known as *pāṅkaṟ-kūṭṭam*. The *pāṅkan* is an intimate friend or companion of the hero. He is a well-wisher, who listens with sympathy to the hero's difficulties, gives him the least trouble and positively helps the friend and leaves him afterwards.[25] The pāṅkan (companion) is in some respects similar to the *ācārya* (preceptor) who stands by the Lord and helps him in his efforts to reclaim lost souls (souls that have been alienated).

*Tōḻiyiṟ Kūṭṭam*

Tōḻiyiṟ Kūṭṭam is the one section that secures by far the largest attention in *Akattiṇai*. "It may be noted that without the *pāṅki*-the companion of the heroine, the love life of the lovers would not last; and that among the poetic creations in love lyrics the pāṅki plays an important role; in fact she is indispensable thereto".[26] In the

Vaiṣṇava religious tradition, there is the firm conviction that if the jīvātma is to reach paramātma, the mediation or intercession of Sri (Lakshmi) is indispensable. Srī is ever close to paramātma; in like manner the pāṅki (friend of the lady) is not so close. Yet from the practical point of view, in one sense, the union between lovers brought about by the pāṅki is similar to God-union achieved through the kindly mediation of Laksmi. Thus, the Lord's *nirhētuka* kṛpa (spontaneous and natural grace), the ācārya's unwearied effort to help souls to reach God; and Lakśmi's intercession (pleading with the Lord on behalf of the soul)-three important aspects in the religious life of the Vaiṣṇavites may be said to resemble in part the three types of union referred to above. Tolkāppiyam characterises all the actions of the pāṅki (lady companion) as ''varaital vēṭkaip poṛuḷa'.[37] Even so, Lakṣmi with her innate generosity emphasises that the short comings of the souls should not be made much of (or emphasised) that there is none who does not err and so saying she brings about God union.

## *Akapporuḷ modes used by the Āḻvār*

There are several other steps in the course (for progress) of love-relationship. Of these we find in Tiruvāymoḻi, the following:

(veṛiyāṭṭu), (maṭalūrtal) undertaking a symbolic act intimating to people how the hero has neglected her, Alar uraittal (public denunciation), Aṛattoṭu Niṛṛal (Revelation with virtue), pirivil Iraṅkutal (self-pity at separation), ''uru veḷip pāṭu kaṇṭu pulampal'' (seeing hallucinations of the object of love and pouring out one's heart), Tūtu anupputal (sending messengers), Tannuṭ kaiyāṛeytiṭu kiḷavi (becoming completely exhausted in mind due to heightened feeling), Kāmam mikka kaḻipaṭar kiḷavi (The speech emanating from

excess of love longing). Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār sings of elopement also. In Nammāḻvār's songs we also notice 'Mikka kāmattu miṭal' that is, the heroine, impelled by overmastering feelings of love sets out towards the abode of the hero overstepping normal bounds. This is a part of peruṉtiṇai. As it is also recognised in Akattiṇai, it is not discountenanced in religious literature. On the contrary 'Mataleṟṟam' (public denunciation of the hero's callous neglect of the bride) and 'Mikka kāmattumiṭal' (the bold step of proceeding towards the abode of the hero) find a special place in religious poetry. The justification, say the learned, is found in the supreme wisdom and benevolence, the unsurpassed beauty and uniqueness of the hero, who has none to equal and much less to surpass him.

*The significance of peṇpēccu (The statements made in the form of a lady)*

Ācāṟyahṛdaya furnishes an appropriate explanation for the phenomenon of the Āḻvar getting into the state of mind of a bride and speaking out her feelings[28]. *Tirumantra* and the Ācārya are, it is said, like the mother and the father respectively for the bride at this stage in her spiritual life. Getting the *maṅgala-sūtra* of *Tirumantra*, the bride is wedded to a handsome bridegroom. All the stages in the progress of the jīvātmā to paramapada culminating in communion with the Divine may be said to correspond to the several stages in the sojourn of the newly wedded wife to her partner's home and experiencing the joy of union. Hence, it is most natural to look upon the Āḻvār as a bride and the sentiments he expresses in that state as those of a lady in deep love. Between the Āḻvār and Laksmi, the consort of the Lord, the following resemblances are noticeable. 1) serving no one other than the Lord, 2) existing for His sake, 3) having the Lord as the only refuge, 4) existing

as long as there is union 5) inability to exist without Him and 6) receiving protection from the Lord alone[29].

In Tiruvāymoḻi we find the Āḻvār speaking not generally as a woman, buf in particular as a mother, a companion and a bride. He speaks as a bride in seventeen decads, as a mother in seven and as a companion in three decads. It is necessary to ascertain how these three attitudes differ. They represent three states of knowledge in a woman and are designated thus.[30] In the state of bhakti, the knowledge of the true relation between the Lord and the jiva is called companion (tōḻi). It is so called because *sambanda–ñāna*, namely, the unique relation of the jiva being the servant of the Lord alone, is responsible for his seeking union with the Lord; and likewise it is the companion that brings about the union between the hero and the heroine. It is on grounds of this similarity, that this metaphor has been employed. Next, firm conviction in the efficacy of the means adopted is called the 'mother'. When the bride, under the promptings of intense love, insists on going to the place of the lover, the mother counsels patience and tells the daughter that to go after the lover instead of waiting for his arrival would be flouting family tradition (would be undignified and go against the family tradition). Thus the stage of definitive knowledge that the Lord himself is the upāya is aptly called the 'mother'. The next higher stage, when besides the knowledge that the Lord is Supreme and is without a peer, there is the inability to brook delay in reaching Him, and the person goes beyond the conviction that the Lord is the upāya and gets into a state of mind when the individual feels that existence is impossible without reaching the Divine. Such a state is termed '*talaivi*' the heroine. These three states are always present in the Āḻvār. Although they are distinct states, they don't refer to three persons. Most of the expressions

occurring in these three states have different inner meanings that symbolise different things. The breasts stand for bhakti; the hip for vairāgya (renunciation); eyes for ñāna; heavy tresses for the blossoming of knowledge, and so on. A fuller description of these could be found in Ācāryahṛdaya.[31]

To what extent the twenty seven decads of stanzas found in Tiruvāymoḻi figuring as sentiments expressed by women (peṉ pēccu) and classifiable as akapporuḷ songs, really conform to the requirements of Akapporuḷ and to what extent they diverge therefrom and what is their special feature may be examined.

## (*B*) *Sending of love messengers*

Among the songs of the heroine, four groups of verses deal with the sending of messengers. The first occasion on which the Āḻvār sings as a bride is the fourth decad in the first centum, commencing with the words "Añciṟaiya maṭaṉārāy;" and they describe how birds such as ṉārai are asked to go as messengers.

### *Sending out messengers*

(1) In setting forth the grammar of Akapporuḷ, Tolkāppiyam devotes two big sūtras one in Kaḷaviyal and another in *Kaṟpiyal* indicating the places where the heroine speaks, and a few exceptions. It is not clearly stated therein that the sending of messengers by the heroine on account of her inability to bear separation from her lover is an occasion for her speech. Still for the reason that she has been confined to house and heavily guarded (or watched), her mind gets confused (or she loses clarity of thinking) and she is likely to report her condition to her companion[1]. Tolkāppiyar says that it is usual for the poet

to sing as if one talks to entities such as the sea, grove at the sea shore, beast, deer, bird and mind and they listened[2]. In the mode called 'Kaiyaṟu kiḻavi', there is scope, it is believed for the bride to express her mind. The Commentator thinks that the expression 'piṟa' in the Sūtras on *Kaḷavu* and *Kaṟpu* contains reference to talking to birds. In the ancient poems and anthologies there are not many instances of the heroine sending messengers. In a few stanzas there may be just indications of that[3]. Perhaps because he could not get any illustrative instances, Naccinārkkiniyar was content merely to state 'Kaṟpiyal talaivi tūtuviṭṭatu vaṉtuḷikkāṇka'[4]. 'But in the songs of the Āḻvār this finds a much larger part than other modes; as many as forty stanzas are devoted to this theme. In later literature and in the prabandas, this has greatly multiplied.

When the pangs of separation are very intense, it must have an outlet; else there would be a collapse or the mind might burst, as it were. That is why the poet describes the heroine as talking to plants or birds near about and bemoaning her sad plight. This is the most natural thing to do. In the domain of Akapporuḷ itself, *Naṟṟiṇai*, 102 furnishes a fitting illustration. The gist of the poem may be stated thus: "O beautifull red mouthed Parrot! eat well; (have your repast), satisfy your wants first and then to fulfil my desire just convey this message (to my Lord). I entreat you with folded arms. If you go to your partner who lives in my lover's domain and meet please tell the chief of the hilly country, that the daughter of the Kuṟavās of the hill is once again obliged to guard the tinai field". The Āḻvār, as nāyaki, talks to the following and gives them the Commission of going to her lover – *ṉārai*, *kuyil*, *annam makanṟil*, *small kuruku*, *varivaṇṭu*, the young parrot, small pūvai, the cold wind, and his own mind. In truth, there is the least belief that they would go on this errand and help

him to fulfil his desire. If that were so, having sent the first messenger, the nārai, the Āḻvār must have anxiously waited for its return. But he did not. The intensity of his desire would not permit him to wait. The ten stanzas (1-4) representing ten different approaches yield considerable joy. With the intention of sending the male nārai as messenger, the nāyaki (Āḻvār) first addresses the famale nārai, describes its wings which are to transport it quickly, gives appropriate marks of identification to enable the messenger to identify the destination, and hinting that the bird would be the first to have the good fortune of meeting the Lord, whom the nāyaki (Āḻvār) is anxious to meet.

*The heroine* next addresses a happy pair of cuckoos. The expression "Inakkuyilkāḷ" suggests that as they are happily together, it is their duty to see that her loneliness is quickly removed. They have to do nothing except to go and report the fact of her loneliness. Speaking to swans found along with their partners, she (Āḻvār) says the wonderful deed of the Lord measuring the worlds draws her to him. This is all that the bird has to tell him. "A certain woman is seen greatly confused and distraught in mind". When it is mentioned that a deer has been struck by an arrow, would not the marksman know that he has hit it? To a pair of Makanṟil birds which will not bear separation from each other, the Nāyaki recounts a former incident. "Once when we were together, there was a momentary separation and I lost colour and could not stand it; though he saw it he did not take pity and say that separation won't do. To one who is of that nature, what is the message I am to send? All this is implied in the single expression 'Kaṇṭiraṅki'.

"Oh! little Kuruku searching for food! You live in the region filled with water; I too have my eyes filled with

water! Can't you do this for me? Please tell him that he is the protector of all the worlds! Won't he protect me too? If not, he would lose the claim to be called 'Nārāyaṇa'. When you meet him, please ask him – Should not he strive to retain that title?" "Oh! beautiful bee! he can come to a fair understanding. Tell him that even if he is not quite willing to relent, he may be pleased to mount the gracious Garuda and pass along this road at least, if not to my abode, before my life departs; and that would suffice. That would not be derogatory to him; and it would mean that we would be blessed with his sight and thereby helped to live". "Oh! little parrot nurtured by me! I am greatly afflicted by the bleak-north wind. What harm will result if you tell the Lord who is with his Consort, who is so mindful of my wrongs as not to bestow his favour on me." "What mistake has she comitted against thy unsurpassed greatnes?" "What a wonder, he refuses to forgive me for my sins even when his consort goddes Laksmi is by his side".

After all this pleading, no useful result follows. Then addressing a little pūvai she says, "The Lord has not come because you have not gone and spoken on my behalf". She thinks it Is starting to go and hastens to countermand It saying, "It is now too late; even if he is to no purpose. I am broken. I have nurtured thee; you are my child; hereafter you have to look for some one who would take care of you, cast about for someone to feed you". Such is her doleful statement almost at what seemed a collapse.

He created the world, and for protecting it, he reclines on Ātisēsa in the ocean; the supreme purpose in creating us is that we may adore him and be his servants. Not minding his greatness he associated with me; but now he has forgotten that it is his duty to forgive our faults.

Thinking that if he is reminded of the greatness of his patience and forbearance, he would surely come to our rescue. Only in that hope the nāyaki sends these messengers to the Lord in the viyūka state. Here birds figure for the most part. They are said to symbolise ācāryas. The truth implied herein, namely that preceptors should have such commendable qualities as birds possess is to be appreciated. In the field of akapporuḷ literature these stanzas stand out unique in expressing at once the most intense feeling with the highest philosophic thoughts.

2. The next section dealing with the sending of messengers is found in the first decad of 6th centum, commencing with the words "Vaikalpūṅkaḷivāy". Surrounded by the great wealth, resources of Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr, the Lord, who took birth (avatāra) in order to save suffering humanity, perhaps forgot for a while his duty. If he is reminded that among those to be protected I am also one awaiting here his grace, he would surely come. With this conviction, the message is intended to be conveyed to Vibhavāvatāra. Īṭu, however, thinks that it is meant for arcāvatāra(6-1-1).

It is a Tamil literary convention that the person separated from the lover gives expression to his or her misery in the coastal region (neytal n̲ilam). This misery prompts one to send messengers. In this case, Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr too is in the coastal region. Birds that frequent this region, such as Kuruku, nārai and swan are sent as messengers. The request of the nāyaki is that the intensity of her love and how she is wearing out in separation must be made known to the Lord. Her mode of addressing these birds 'Van̲tu' mēyum kurukinaṅkāḷ', is indicative of their intimate relationship to her. In several stanzas she clearly instructs those who are to take her message to the Lord to go with folded hands. It may be due to a sense of irritation at

neglect. In many of the stanzas, the beauty of his lips and of his extreme comeliness are described, thereby indicating how formerly he had made her captive by hisunsurpassed excellences. "Oh! dark nārai pecking along with thy loving mate!" By addressing thus, the nāyaki conjures before her mind the picture of herself rendered completely pale on account of the denial of such an association with the loved one. Having previously given the instruction 'Kaikūppi' meaning 'with folded hands' the nāyaki (Āḻvār) now says "Pātam Kaitoḻutu", worshipping the feet of the Lord with the hands. Love of God will not stop with offering obeisance with folded hands, but would inevitably take one on to prostrating at his feet.

In the stanza describing the sending of swans as messengers, the nāyaki asks them to state that "one lady's body melts in sorrow" (Orutti Uṭalam naiṉtu Urukum). The implication is this:- When there is little mental depression it shows itself in the body; so before it is affected should not one take remedial measures? 'One woman languishes' ('Orutti Urukum') suggests the man does not. Tell him this, says the Nāyaki. This is clearly the duty of swans, because it is known that as Hamsa, the Lord once before taught mankind the esteemed vedas. "Aṭiyēnukkum Poṟṟuminē" is indeed a happy thought. 'That region, the domain of the blessed, may make those who reach it concentrate on their own experience. Pray don't imitate him; have some thought of me too': is her request. Those who reach mōksa have no more thought of their body; like that don't forget my case, says she.

Noticing some cuckoos on a punnai tree near by, she cajoles them and entreats them to go to the Lord and return with a word that would remove her distress. Then a parrot is sent. The Nāyaki says the way would be filled

with pleasures. It may be difficult to go past them (these snares). Or when it goes to his presence, there may be so many crowding round him that it may get a beating. Do go unmindful of these difficulties. 'Just go somehow' she implores. The Āḻvār has in mind the idea that those who (set out to) help others – the great ones who are intent on serving others (parōpakāra) – connot consider their own pleasure or pain. The abode of the Lord is described as 'Ceruvoṉ pūmpoḻil cūḻ Cekkar Vēlait Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr'. Hence it is a place conducive to the enjoyment of bliss. It is interesting to note that this fits in with the description found in Akapporuḷ works (Kuṟi iṭamkūṟal). Describing the transcendent beauty of the Lord's form and of his ornaments, the Nāyaki hints that the parrot (iḷamkiḷi) would have an opportunity to see them fully well before she herself could get a chance. This is revealed in "Tiruṉtak Kaṇṭē oṉṟu urai", seeing him clearly convey the message. The idea in addressing these messengers as 'Oṇkiḷiyē', 'Oṇciṟupūvāy' and the like is that in their appearance they are like the Lord in that they are only to be seen to be enjoyed. In this address there is also the touch of sadness that in sending the beautiful creatures on hand in this errand she would be missing them. In speaking of 'Viṭivai Caṅkolikkum Tiruvaṉvaṇṭūr', the hint is thrown that in that place, there would be dawn (day break), devotees would blow the conch as they set out for their morning prayers; there won't be the long night (the dark night of the soul) as here. When you go, don't convey the message when he is holding court, but when he is alone with his consort. The idea is the mission would be fruitful then only, on accunt of the mediation of Laksmi.

In the concluding stanza describing the sending of bees is of special interest in the whole range of akapporuḷ works in Tamil as it contains a wealth of subtle and

ennobling thoughts. Bees are supposed to have an especial competence to go as emissaries. That is why they are singled out for special invitation and given special instructions. The special features of the bees are the following.- (1) They possess six legs; (2) without fear of crowds, they have the capacity to seek the flower garland, sit on it and have their say (3) It aptly symbolises the Lord (Some compare bees to one of the three mystic mantras held sacred by the vaiṣṇavites, namely dvaya). The idea behind describing the excellences such as valour of the Lord is to imply, by contrast that the delay is due to the Information reaching him and then no obstacles could stand in the way of his reaching the Āḻvār nāyaki. Even in the state of extreme distress at separation, the bride praises heroism greatly and refers to the Lord with great gusto as 'ēṟucēvakanār'. You have only to tell the Lord, 'She also exists', says the Nāyaki. 'Say that there are still people steeped in suffering' is one meaning. He is under the impression, that persons separated from him don't exist; but that is not the truth; there is one such.

3) The subsection that starts wlth the opening words "Ponnula kāḻirō" (6-8) describes the third attempt at sending messengers. They are directed to the Lord in his para and antaryāmi aspects. From the repeated use of the expression "seeing the Lord of the celestials" ('Vānavar kōnaik kaṇṭu"), it is learnt that paratva is meant; again the words "Eṅkuc Cenṟākilum kaṇṭu", (go any where and see him) it is clear that aṉtaryāmitva, which is also paratva, is meant.

Due to preoccupation with the protection of the created worlds, the Lord forgets for a while the joy of associating with his devotes. That is the reason why he has not thought of me. There is complete similarity (parama sāmya)

in the experience of bliss of the Lord and of the jīva. The Lord considers as his own the bliss of the finite souls. If he is told about this, he wold come; therefore messengers must bc sent, thinks the Nāyaki. There is also the view that out of extreme love of mankind, the Ālvār sends messengers.

We find here the offer of a valuable prize to the collection of birds that goes as messengers. The whole section starts with that. Since mōkṣa seems to her closer than even this world, she hastens to offer it right at the outset. The nāyaki who seeks those who would help her to be reunited with her lover offers the two worlds to the prospective helpers. How is this possible? (How can she do this?). She does this because of her greatness in having the Lord always at the centre of her thought. In the state of union, he gave himself and all his possessions to her (he made himself and all his possessions hers). Now in separation, he has let himself down, so thinks the Ālvār. After talking of having gifted the two worlds to the birds, why does she fall at their feet and beg of them to take her message? The answer is, the Ālvār is taking refuge under the devotees of God, for that is unfailing in its efficacy. They are addressed as 'Nannalap pullinaṇkāḷ'. 'Nalam' signifies all the excellences necessary for a protector; 'puḷ' (bird) signifies the possession of two wings, namely Ñāna and vairāgya. 'Inam' denotes puruṣakāra (i.e. standing as mediator, one who pleads with the Lord on behalf of the Jiva). So all the qualities needed in a protector are mentioned. The Lord is 'mukil vaṇṇan', is lika dark rain clouds, that is, is bounteous in his gifts and does not discriminate. But I am not in the region where it rains, but constitute the place where from the water is drawn. She says 'Ennalam Koṇṭa mukil Vaṇṇan'. Offering them mōkṣa (ponnulaku) is not as wages for their help.

If by representing my true condition to the Lord you enable me to be reunited with him, you could live happily, says the nāyaki, without hearing cries of distress; you can't stand the sight of a woman killing herself; nor could you be hearing cries of distress.

The first stanza itself states that the two worlds have been given away. Hereafter, what is there to be offered? Some parrots are sent; and If they return successful in their mission, they are assured a greater reward than before. "You could" they are told, "sit on my hands and partake of the rice cooked in ghee and together with it milk and receive my laudation (or grateful thanks)." Is it not a great thing to be applauded by one to whom the Lord has given himself up. The parrots are asked to hurry back; for after being united with the Lord, there would be no chance of serving the parrots (the ācāryas); hence they must run back in order to provide an opportunity for the nāyaki to serve them. The third stanza mentions the recompense, the greatest (reward) recompense-for those who return from the mission. It is this – the flowers which have now dried up (on account of visḷēsa) would on receipt of good news of their return, become fresh again; and their honey would be for the exclusive delectation of bees. The Lord is 'Tūviyam puḷḷuṭait teyva vaṇṭu' (9-9-4) and the nāyaki seems to suggest that exclusively for him and for the bees she is providing an oppotunity to drink or (partake) of the honey from the same pot (vessel or container). Then she asks *tumpis* to seek the Lord and ask him "Does this befit you?" It amounts to asking: 'Does grace mean killing a woman, and holding court putting on a garland?"

Later, she once again sends the little pūvai young birds she has nurtured. Her references to 'enmārvan', 'en perumān'; 'enkaṇṇan', make it clear that she is lost in

admiration of each of the perfections of the Lord, such as his adornment, loveliness of form and easy accessibility. From the statement 'Tan kaḻal mēl taṇtulāy namakkanṟi nalkān', she draws attention to the fact that his loveliness of form is exclusively for her, for none else; and that the basis for sending messengers is his quality of making himself over to the devotees. "Nān kaṟpiyā vaitta māṟṟam collic cenminkal" is the instruction she gives to the little birds. Yes, reaching there, when you notice his beauty, you may forget what you meant to say, and might stand dumb-founded; hence go on repeating what I have taught you to say. Sympathising with her own lot, her misfortune, at having to send those whom she has herself nurtured, i. e. her own children to bring back her lover, she calls herself 'tīvinaiyēn', (the worst sinner that I am).

In the next stage she entreats lifeless dolls (pāvai play things) to be her messengers. The supremely intelligent self (paramātma) has deserted me; birds with their meagre intelligence fly and have other interests. Perhaps this is due to their intelligence; hence it is best the nāyaki seeks the aid of insentient play materials (dolls). The mental state of the nāyaki is such that she has come to the stage of seeking ths aid of insentient, lifeless objects.

Looking at the white kuruku birds with their spotless wings standing nearby she asks: Is my state such that you believe you could go on the errand a little later? Look at my extreme pallor. How long do you think this state would last? Then addressing big storks and swans she begs them. "Do me this favour; even if he does not come, at least get me his words of reply." This is the state of true love. In Akam songs this is met with! Compare the kuṟaḷ.

'Nacaiyār nalkār eninum avarmāṭṭu
Icaiyum inīya cevikku.' - (kuṟāḷ 1199).

4. The fourth time messengers are sent is described in Tiruvāymoḻi (9–7), in the stanzas commencing with the words "enkānalaṅkaḻivāy". Describing the supernatural beauty of the Lord of Tirumūḻik kaḷam – a holy place in the western hilly region–the Āḻvār (nāyaki) sends several kinds (species) of birds as messengers to that Lord. The Āḻvār describes it in his own words as follows:- 'Tirumūḻik kaḷatturaiyum oṉcuṭarai nōkkik kiḷimoḻiyāḷ alaṟṟiya col' (9–7–11). He won't let down those who are truly devoted to him; and that is why he does not care to come to me. He is quite unaware of the great damage his beauty and excellences are causing in me. The Āḻvār in the position of a nāyaki is convinced that if the Lord is told about his unsurpassed beauty and excellences and asked: 'Is it possible for any one who has seen all this to live without him?' If he is told about it, he would surely come. So he entreats some birds to go as messengers. The situation is as follows. The hero and the heroine accidentally meet and they feel drawn to each other, and some how there is separation. The heroine greatly taken in by the great beauty of the hero, finds existence miserable, is unable to bear the pangs of separation; she goes to the garden, and sends the birds found there as her messengers to the hero. The hero to whom this message is sent is the arcāmūrtti. The locality where this takes place is the coastal region. We see here the nāyaki sending in addition to the stork, bees and the like as before, the cloud (mukil) also. She requests *maṭa nārai* to go on this errand and, on return, along with its mate must place their feet on her head. The legs that helped me must certainly be borne by my head which has been blessed with true life. Since the messengers symbolise ācāryas, this is to be taken as indicating how one should conduct himself before the preceptor.

'Ceṅkamalattu alarpōlum kaṉ kaikāl ceṅkanivāy, akkamalattu ilai pōlum tirumeni aṭikaḷ' The lady describes the hero, the Lord like this: It is the eye that first serve to bring about the bond with the heroine; when the vision makes one captive, the hand embraces the loved one' persons under the influence of the love that wells from within prostrate before the feet of the Lord. The person who thus performs obeisance at the feet is comforted, encouraged, by the benevolent smile of the Lord. Such is the beautiful description of the way in which by successive stages the heroine is immersed in God-love. In addressing the clouds-the nāyaki says, "when you speak to the Lord, if you said" Pray bestow thy divine form to her" are you afraid that he would deprive you of your lovely form which is similar to his, and also punish you by driving you away from the (atmosphere) sky?" Mark how natural such a speech would be from the love-lorn bride.

In addressing the bees as 'Tūmoḻivāy Vaṉṭinaṅkaḷ', the Nāyaki means to compliment them on their especial skill in speaking. Even if the Lord were unwilling to respond, their sweet and reasonable speech would persuade him to come. Sweet speech is an indispensable trait in a messenger. 'Ceppputirēl cuṭarvaḷaiyum kalaiyum ceppumin', is an instruction to the bees to report to the Lord that the heroine's beautiful bangles have slipped and her countenance has lost its lustre. Every one knows that in Akapporuḷ songs, the slipping of the bangles and the loss of lustre due to separation from the lover are described at length.

'Kurukinaṅkaḷ tūymāṟṟam oṉṟu paṉiyīr' is the request of the lady to the group of Kurukus. The words of the messenger are referred to as 'pure words' because they give life to a woman on the verge of death. It is sufficient if it is said once; but if it is repeated a second time, it

becomes a reproach or a sin. He who unites us with the Lord – he who helps us whoever he may be, is to be referred to with respect; hence the expression 'paṉiyīr'. She calls young kuruku birds and swans and asks them to inform the Lord that his neglect of the nāyaki does not become him; that it goes with love and extreme delicacy; not only that, it is utterly heartless (devoid of grace); hence she wants them to communicate to him her hopless state before she ceases to be; Thus she concludes the sending of messages stating that if he fails to come, it would mean certain death of the nāyaki could there be a greater measure of sorrow and inability to bear the separation.

## *(C) Heroine's utterances*

The other modes shall be considered now. *Extreme distress* (technically known as Tannuṭ Kaiyāṟeytiṭu kiḷavi' – Kāmam mikka kaḷipaṭar kiḷavi). In the forgoing instances in the decads dealing with messengers, the heroine out of extreme distress speaks out her mind to various creatures and objects and gathers some little sustenance. But in the section commencing with the words 'Vāyum tirai ukaḷum' (2-1) her distress is more intense than before. Earlier there was some energy left for sending message; but here it seems to her that those who could be entrusted with the message are themselves afflicted (by a like love-sickness) and consequently she feels miserable for their sake also. Ārāta kātal śatakōpar', Śatakopa whose love knows no limit, imagines that all things such as *nāraī*, *anṟil*, the sea, the wind, clouds, darkness, back waters and the lamp are caught up in God-love and are suffering like herself on account of separation from the Lord. It is usual for those afflicted with misery to meet others similarly situated, and provide an outlet for their feelings by talking of their woes

and derive comfort therefrom. In accordance with theis practice the Āḻvār approaches these objects and cries "Are you also victims of an affliction similar to mine? Are you too suffering from separation from the Lord as I do?."

Though even my mother is asleep and the world of celestial beings who have a reputation for not winking may be asleep, the nārai is sleepless. Through the long night, seeming interminable, the anṟil without retiring to bed, keeps awake and suffers mental agony. The roaring sea through night and day pines in misery. All through the ages, the bleak north wind roams over sea, land and mountain (even as I seek the milky ocean, Vēṅkaṭam hills and Paramapada). The cloud, the benefactor of mankind, melts, pours out in sorrow. The moon with a single digit has evidently waned out of extreme sorrow and is unable to remove darkness from the world. The dense darkness of the night is 'still', silent, unable to express its sorrow and draw some comfort therefrom. The backwaters are agitated all the time; day and night roaring on account of their misery. The unceasing flame of the lamp is emitting heat and cannot be touched as it has caught the fever of separation (viraha-tāpa). The marvellous description of diverse objects as suffering on account of separation from the Divine, from Narayana is as fascinating as it is inspiring. It is difficult to find any parallels to these stanzas of exquisite beauty in the literatures of the world.

*Maṭal ūrtal* or *maṭal ēṟutal*:- (5-3): Tolkāppiyam, Kaḷavu sūtras 11 and 20 refer to *maṭal mā kūṟutal*, and Tol. AK. su 51 to *maṭal mā eṟutal*. *Kūṟutal* pertains to Aiṉtiṇai and *ēṟutal* to *peruṉtiṇai*. For the rest, we have to rely for our information about this only from a few Caṅkam works. *maṭa l mā* is a horse made out of palmyra stalks. A garland of *āviram* flowers is put on it; and a

string of glass beads is attached to it. The person mounting on it wears a garland of bones and erukkam buds, and goes round. This practice of maṭal ēṟutal or kūṟutal was practised with regard to lovers who have been united in their minds. Later, if for any reason there was obstruction to their getting married, the hero out of inability to brook delay may, in is said, resort to *maṭal kūṟutal*. It is one way of making known to others the strength of his love.

The famous Tirukkuṟaḷ also refers to the significance of resorting to *maṭal ēṟutal*; it reveals the patience and modesty of the heroine who refrains from it. It does not however, discountenance or reject the practice of Maṭal mā Kūṟutal. Citing an old verse talking of maṭal mā kūṟutal, Naccinārkkiniyar also says that it has no reference to *maṭal ēṟutal* but only to kūṟutal.[1] This may be borne in mind. Tolkāppiyam also prevents or prohibits only the practice of women adopting maṭal ēṟutal and not maṭal kūṟutal.[2] So the Āḻvār ṉāyaki resorting to maṭal kūṟutal cannot be considered as going against the grammatical rules as such.

That apart, the Āḻvār as nāyaki says 'Yām maṭalūrṉtum (5-3-10), considering the stanza in its entirety it would be clear that the Āḻvār is aware that this act may be constructed as an offence to her modesty and that other women in the neighbourhood would criticise it and it might cause a flutter in the land; but asks, what if this happens?. I know that I must have waited, and that his coming and taking me would be the proper thing, and that the decision I have now taken does not accord with my nature, but I am determined on reaching him even by this extreme step. That is the force of ·Um' in 'maṭalūrṉtum'. "If he does not come if he does not join me – the belief that he exists would be

falsified; who (will believe) the vedic teachings; people will only believe the words of mine who was united with him". These and similar suggestions reveal very clearly her strong determination to reach him at any cost, and the immeasurable extent to which she has been rendered miserable by his leaving her. If he has not so long and to this extent caused her distress, it would detract from his greatness; if the nāyaki has not felt so miserable as she has actually been, it would be a reflection on her love.

If, in accordance with strict grammatical principles, the bride is not to adopt *maṭal kūṟutal*, one should consider why the injunction arose. If it be said that the hero can adopt the practice of *maṭal kūṟutal*, if he cannot bear the pangs of separation, since the Lord is the only hero, and since there are no others like him in the world, it would follow that the talk of women adopting this on account of extreme distress and inability to brook any further delay in reaching the Lord is only appropriate. That is why *paṉṉirupāṭṭiyal*, a late work on pāṭṭiyal concedes this. 'Kaṭavuḷar talaivarāy varuṅkāl maṭanmāp peṇṭir ēṟuvar".[3]

In the first stanza itself, the heroine has stated that the comments of people would not affect her. One should guard against the adverse comments of godly minded people; but those of others are nothing to us. Then she talks of the Lord with lotus-like eyes in whom she has lost herself and her own ruddy lips and dark eyes have now been rendered pale.

All her desires centre round this - while there are maidens who find fault with him for lack of qualities, he must come to her in all splendour, and her eyes should feast on his excellences and she should adore and

worship him and thus silence all detractors. When would such a time arrive? She is anxiously looking for its consummation. Should the heroine join the lover and enjoy his company or is she to worship at his feet? The answer is in the state of separation, it is quite natural to long for worship. That is what, Sīta told Hanumān who came as a messenger to Asōkavana:[4] "Kindly tell Rāma that I bow in reverence seek the opportunity to approach and worship him".

In the grammar of love lyrics it is usual to refer to three sorts of situations that may bring the hero and heroine together in love relation. They are called in the Tamil poetic tradition – *Pūttaru puṇarcci*, *puṇaltaru pṇarcct* and *Kaḷiṟutaru-puṇaicci*. In the first type, because she has been saved by the hero on an occasion of danger and offered flowers by him, She offers herself to join him out of gratitude. When Kaṇṇan after performing many a deed of valour smiles, she thinks it is for her sake and offers herself to him as his slave. Having accused him of heartlessness in 'Taiyaḷār mun'- now she says 'when am I to join him?' While describing him, "Cēṇuyar Vānattirukkum", as if to suggest that he has moved far far away, thinking that having lost herself completely to him she would even resort to maṭal and go seeking him anywhere. In her extreme infatuation, she even threatens to resort to *maṭal*. Since Kaṇṇan has not come and joined her, casting all fear to the winds, she has decided to adopt maṭal not minding that it would shock the people of her village. That is the trend of these stanzas. They breathe an atmosphere surcharged with feeling at once intense and quite moving.

*The Heroine's Anguish* (5-4): To lovers a night of separation seems ages; and a day may seem seven days. Though such an account is not found in grammars on Akapporul, there are many songs depicting the dire

distress felt by the bride at separation and her anxious waiting hoping for the return of the partner. The heroine who had decided to have recourse to maṭal is unable to carry it out as night intervened; thus prevented from her resolve she is steeped in greater gloom and describes her inconsolable sorrow in songs that would melt even the stony hearted. This is how one commentator connects the section dealing with maṭal with the next which describes in an inimitable way the heroine's self-pity and utter misery in her forlornstate. The entire village (town) is asleep; why? the whole world is steeped in darkness. All water sheds are still without the least ruffle from waves. There is no scope for seeing and hearing; for the night is totally dark and still. Like the mighty flood over-flowing the embarkment, her sorrow overflows. Previously she talked of 'Cēṭpaṭṭa Yāmaṅkaḷ' the night split up into parts, but now she refers to it as one long night extended beyond measure 'Ôr Ṉīḷiravāy ṉiṉṭatu'. If he had arrived, the case would be different. "He who gave himself up to the eternally free souls (nityasūris), and who went to help the world without people seeking his aid, has not chosen to confer his favour on me. He who reclines on his serpent bed and dissolved the whole world and kept it safe at praḷaya does not choose to come" says she. In this state of despair, she exclaims: who is there to save my soul? Is not this plaintive cry most moving?.

The use of verbs with long vowels such as 'ṉiṉṭatāl' and 'Vārānāl' is a novel device to indicate the intensity of her sorrow. In the next stanza, she asks 'If he who resided in my heart has left it, why should you too, my heart, cease to be friendly to me?". Finding that Kākutta (Srī Rāma of the Kakutsa dynasty) who dispels the miseries of all, does not come, I would like to terminate my life; but, being a woman, that course too is no

open to me! The woman is a *parā tantra* (is dependant) has no freedom, and has therefore no control even over her own soul. The idea is this:- (The soul is the Lord's property, and not one's own. What right have we then to terminate our life?). The next stage is even more moving. The heroine says: 'The resplendent sun that carries out the Lord's behests has gone into hiding somewhere unable to see me suffer (The reference is to the sun not rising and thereby terminating the long night of sorrow). Why has not the Omnipotent Lord who is capable of protecting all, the benevolent Lord who measured the worlds, presented his beautiful form before me? To do this, he does not have to ask for a gift of land from anybody; nor has he to measure the worlds; it is enough if he shows his resplendent form. Why this delay in coming? Simply His appearance is indicated by the word 'Vārānāl'.

What is the limit to which her distress has increased? It is 'eṇperiya Ciṉtaiṉōy' – it is of such an intensity that it cannot be measured at all. It is the ending of this that matters. It seems as if she suggests thinking of him or forgetting of him is not as difficult as finding freedom from this misery. In the subsequent stanzas she cries in utter despair. 'Oh God! What am I to do? Even the cool southern breeze burns me like fire, kills me' says she. 'Dense darkness and minute drops', that is, the dark night with dew drops scorch me intensely more than even heat. Darkness and dew are said to be conducive to happy union. Hence, the grammar of love poetry refers to the hilly region with the dewy season as the time for lovers' meeting[4]. But here, on account of separation, even they scorch her. "enṉeñcu iṭar tīrppar iniyār" who is there to dispel my sorrow? I am melting in sorrow; like myself, even the atmosphere is melting and drops of dew flow

even therefrom. Besides her, there is no other analogy to the atmosphere that is melting in sorrow. There is no one to console me saying now and then "The Lord who measured the world has not come; The whole world is asleep; Oh! what a strange situation!" cries the heroine.

*Projection : uru velippāṭu 1* (5-5) When the hero and the heroine happen to meet casually and fall in love, there follows a state of mind whereby each thinks constantly of the other, with the result that to each whatever is seen appears as an aspect of the lover. Tolkāppiyam describes this as "Nōkkuva ellām avaiyē pōṟal[6]". Accordingly, the heroine who is all the time thinking of the Lord, finds everything outside as the form of the Lord. This is called 'uruvelippāṭu', projection of what is mental on the outside world. The nāyaki (the Āḻvār) tells her mother and her companions that there is no point in their finding fault with her, for after having seen the Lord of Kuṟuṅkuṭi, her mind is going after the lovely ornaments and transcendental beauty of form of that Lord. That it is 'going after', is indicative of the fact that She has not seen them fully. They seem to say "we too have seen him", and the nāyaki says, "may be so; see him with my mind's eye", and things would be different is the implication. Acquaintance with sacred books is not enough; one must view Him with the eye of bhakti; and then His unsurpassed beauty will come to view. 'His loveliness has entered my eyes and mind, never to leave them' says the nāyaki. All beautiful things reflect his nature, such is her mental concentration.

His Divine face and lotus - like eyes have captured her and are gnawing her very life centre, says the nāyaki; "His nose is like the stem of the lotus creeper; his eyes are like the flowers that have freely blossomed from the creeper; his lips are like the fruit; his lovely body is like

the lotus leaf; such a person, like sugar cane, milk and ambrosia will never, never leave my mind. The stanza describing the loveliness of the Lord is beyond praise. "My mother does not permit me to see him on the score that I am madly in love with him; but having seen him once, his form, which the countless groups of nityasūris are constantly enjoying, appears before my mlnd like a matchless beauty in the midst of a flood of brilliance. It is beyond the perception of others" says the nāyaki (5-5).

*Projection* (*Uruveḻippāṭu*) - II (7-7); Tiruvāymoḻi (7-7) desbribes this phenomenon of projection again. In the earlier phase it was only stated that the Lord's unexcelled beauty was ever before the mind of the nāyaki. But here how that beauty gnaws her mind, how it works on her mind and the extent to which the beauteous face of the Lord comprising lovely nose, lips, eyebrows, teeth, ears, forehead and the face which is a place for all these and his tresses and the like stand before her and kill her, as it were, is described in a metaphorical way.

"I do not know if, his eyes are two yamās who live for sucking the lives of delicate women only. Or are they really eyes?" Such is the doubt expressed. Like a lotus just blossomed it surrounds me from all the four sides and makes it difficult for me to escape therefrom. What am I to do? 'Tāmarai ṉāḷmalarpōl' refers to the experience she had when meeting him first and that has been just mentioned now by her. Like-wise, each of the other organs of the Lord's body is represented as vieing with one another and appearing before her and captivating her mind and causing her utmost misery. Not content with that, they appear all together, it is said, and assault her mind. (The beauty of the description is superb).

But her mother is represented as feeling perplexed and with dissatisfaction writ large abusing her for standing in the courtyard thus, given to musing. The description is most natural. For her part, says she, her mind has been irrevocably united with the Lord who pervades all the three worlds and wields the resplendent crown. The women folk may thenceforth cease to have anything to do with her, concludes the nāyaki.

*Ūṭal*

Ūṭal (Sulking) is one of the five main love aspects (Uripporuḷ) pertaining to Akam poetry. In fact, it is considered indispensable for heightening the joy of union of the hero and the heroine. "Ūṭutal kāmattir kinpam", is the relevant line from *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.[7] *Marutat-tiṇai* songs speak of the hero going astray (seeking the company of other women) and of the heroine's ūṭutal i. e. becoming cross (angry with him) on that account. The early stages of ūṭal are named as pulavi and tuni.[8] They need not be based on facts. Excessive love may be the occasion for suspicion (of infidelity) and the resulting ūṭal. There are many songs depicting how the heroine under the influence of ūṭal (sulking), refuse to admit the lover in to her house.

"Manaivi uyarvum kiḻavōn paṇivum
Ninaiyuṅ kālaip pulaviyuḷ uriya"[9]

is an important sutra from Tolkāppiyam, which deals regarding this aspect. In the scene of the war of love, the hero's attitude as a slave or supplicant and the heroine's attitude as the master, serve to heighten the conquest of bliss (joy).[10] The art of sulking is indeed a subtle game. It is part of chastity. That it plays a part in kaḷavu also is the view of Tolkāppiyar[11].

In Tiruvāymoḻi, this phenomenon of ūṭal is presented as indicating the intensity of love characterising both the

partners, the hero snd heroine. Subsection (6-2) beginning with 'Minniṭaimaṭavār, states that the heroine becomes greatly angry because the hero's arrival has been delayed and says even if he comes it may be followed by another separation, and separation being extremely unbearable, it is best he does not come at all. The hero, who notices her frame of mind stays at a little distance, realises that he cannot win her over by his beauty and delicacy, takes recourse to the most effective expedient of appearing submissive.

The companions and the heroine wear before him an angry countenance. He too, out of boundless love, in apparent confusion approaches clumsily (or with faltering steps). The objects on which he treads happen to be her play things; he picks them up and to express his deep love, he places them before his eyes; and puts them on his head; observing this behaviour, the companions and the heroine conclude, "This man who deserted us is not doing this for our sake - After leaving us, he was in the company of others. Now that he is away from them, he is feeling for their absence and has come here - These playthings are mistaken for theirs and his act is only expressive of that". At this stage, their ūtal (sulking) disappears and they rejoin. It is with this background that this subsection should be studied.

The heroine addresses him as "Oh! wonder-worker who destroyed Laṅkā!" and talks. "The play things - balls and shells - are in his hands. When he gets back from our midst, those women, noted for their beauty and goodness, and objects of his love, will refuse to accept him. A cold welcome awaits him. I shudder at the thought of his trepidation in their presence", says the nāyaki. It looks as if he asks : How can you take me to be so faithless, when

in reality I am unable to bear separation from you even for a moment. She replies : I know quite well your infidelity, your selfseeking. Hereafter there is no use putting faith in your words. "Perfect man! the things in your hand are not those of your sweet hearts. Give me those balls and shells of mine and get off" says the Nāyaki. "We have to manage to exist with those objects that have had contact with your hands". They believe he would not depart. Next they notice a change in the countenance of the hero whom they ordered to get away when he actually came approaching them, and immediately they say your lotus – like eyes and bewitching smile only aggravate our sorrow. Our fate is only this'. People destined to enjoy them are elsewhere. They are beautiful like peacocks. Instead of suffering from their separation you may go and enjoy their company. Under the pretext of playing on the flute to call cattle home, you make them seek thee. Go and play the devilish flute says the heroine. Taking him as saying. Is this playing the flute not the duty cast on me by custom (Kuladharma)?. She says 'Don't utter that lie to us. Perfect man,! say that to those damsels who have not yet known thee'.

Again he seems to say as an explanation for his delay in coming that he had to obey his parents and went to graze cattle, "should I not obey my parents and go to graze cows?" Who knows your mysterious ways! you ate up all the worlds and slept on a banian leaf; you can bring together what are incompatible. Even the *nityasūris* cannot understand your ways. When that is so, how can we understand it?" asks the Nāyaki. He rejoins; why do you talk like this? Have I not been grazing cows? Is that untrue?"; "Yes, losing your mind to those maidens broad, sharp and bewitching eyes, you have never departed from them; and it is there that you graze the cows. You alone are capable

of that! Don't talk any further to us". Thus ends this stanza.

In the next stanza, she says 'This earth and the heavens know your guiles. The Cakra in your hand will bear witness to it. I would like to tell you this; please listen, when those women, who are the real recipients of your favour, are in distress why do you tarry here playing with my pūvais and parrots?".

"You will gain nothing by doing what you think will please us, by picking up the dolls and talking in a big way. There are women of rare beauty, who have none to equal them in the three worlds. There are many of them; and they are fit to be your queens. Go and show them your cleverness. To snatch the play things from us is unbecoming of you. A mistake is a mistake, even if it be perpetrated by a great person like you. As you play, you utter some secret sentiments. (What you expressed at our first meeting.) Should my elder brothers happen to hear them, they would not take a lenient view; one day they may attack you with sticks'' warns the nāyaki.

Thinking "lest he should be under the impression that we are all the while thinking of him'', the companion and the nāyaki engage themselves in building a house of sand and with toy vessels play at cooking. But he upsets them with his feet. There upon, those who, in excessive anger, had decided not to see him, quickly forget their resolve and say "Your deed is pointless; getting away from us you made our hearts melt in sorrow; now to make us joyous and long for union with thee, thinking to capture us in the net of the benign look of your lotus-like eyes, you erased with your holy feet the house we drew up in the sand. You did not stop with erasing the house; you also distroyed our minds. With your feet you effaced the house

we have drawn; and with your eyes you have demolished our thoughts. Yours are not the deeds of one who is benevolent or gracious - You have not accepted with delight our house nor the food we prepared; and you have not stood with your lustrous face and smiling countenance. This is not fair; it is certainly not the act of a gracious Lord. Oh: shining black Gem!, Thou descended on the earth that all the families of cowherds may live an abundant life. Through you, we the cowherd women are steeped in misery''.

Without a knowledge of ūṭal as described in Akattiṉai it would hardly be possible to understand the full import of this section of Tiruvāymoḷi. It is a standing testimony to the fact that the Āḻvār, is fully acquainted with the Tamil tradition in regard to Akattinai. That is why these verses are extremely interesting and significant.

*The heroine's daring*: According to the prescribed procedures concerning akam, the heroine, even when the intensity of her sorrow at parting has reached its utmost limits, should derive some little comfort from the consoling words of companions and others. She may find an outlet for her intense feelings by trying to send inanimate objects as messengers. Sometimes she may even entertain thoughts of setting out in order to join him; and also give verbal expression to her feelings and desires. But, actually going out in search of him outstepping the bounds of modesty conforms to the description "Mikkakāmattu mital", pertaining to the domain of peruṉtiṉai.[14]

The Āḻvār nāyaki has definitely made up her mind to seek her Lord, the presiding Deity, Makaraṉeṭuṅkuḻaikkātan of Tiruppērai. Her companions and mother surround her and say that it won't be proper to lose one's heart to this

extent (to allow the infatuation to go to such lengths) - They say, it would cast a slur on her family reputation. Thereupon, the nāyaki replies: All that talk is futile, that her mind has already been united with his, and that, if her going by herself is considered improper they themselves might take her to that place; thereby averting the alleged ill repute. She also reminds them that it would be their duty to do so; thus without mincing words, she tells them about her determination to join the Lord (7-3).

The nāyaki tells her mother that she sees with her mind's eye the Lard residing in her heart and that it would be difficult to describe his nature in words. She also tells her mother that she has decided to go to Tiruppērai to join the Lord who is the abode of bliss. Then addressing all those who surround her and try to dissuade her from her resolve, she says that her mind is not with her to listen to their words of advice, that it has already left her and gone to the Lord and that it is not in her power to stay its action. Her mind has been caught up in the beautiful lips of the Lord, and that it can no longer listen to their words: Lost in the experience of the Lord's wondrous beauty, the mind has lost its cosyness and modesty; what can be done now? That is the reply the nāyaki gives to those who want her to restrain her mind.

Again she says henceforth how can I spend my time here? His gracious smile, side looks and wondrous deeds have captivated me; there is no return from that. Instead of finding fault with him for having seduced me, what is the use of accusing me. If you say, this fits ill with my femininity, I must plead that it has already left me. If you are interested in my welfare, instead of thinking of constructing a dam after the waters are drained, when my life is still in tact "take me to the Lord's place". says she

sguarely. "My love is not merely like the sea" says the nāyaki, "but it has become more expansive than that". Hence for the speedy fulfilment of my desires fully, take me and leave me at the spot where my troubles would be at an end. There is no sign that my mind would change.

You my companions! you yourself have relaxed your efforts to call the mind back, recognising the futility of that endeavour. Even if the mind and the Lord were to come, there is nothing that could be done here. I am not master of myself. I wanted to go the way my mind has gone. My love grew and expānded due to the public gossip. To day my love encompasses the world and the seven seas and is so vast that the great elements like ākāsa seem small in comparison. There is only one thing that could be done now. Sending a messenger and waiting for his return are out of the question. Even if he were to come I cannot retract, going to his place and joining him is the only course left to me. You need not console me; my modesty is gone; my mind itself is not here. Not caring for the criticism of others I shall seek him through town, village and elsewhere. Not here alone, but every where I have no more modesty; it is ages since he has robbed me of my mind. Don't know how long he had planned for this consummation". Thus ends this subsection. The reference to mutaṟporuḷ (place and time) is not found implicitly in these stanzas. It would be most appropriate if this is regarded as pertaining to *peruṉtiṇai* which is a part of *Akattiṇai*

The stanzas of subsection 2 of the 8th centum, starting with the words 'Naṅkaḷvarivaḷai', also come, more or less, under this category. Here, the nāyaki says how her mind has gone after the hero, how she has changed in consequence and how she is no longer interested with the

companions and others. She also states in great sorrow that there are no words adequate to describe her sorrow. Her bangles and her mental composure (Niṟaivu) have been taken away, says she. Even if time were to come to an and she would not give up the quest without finding him. The whole world knows she has borne the full brunt of odium and there is no longer any point in being modest, says she. She also mentions that she is now left with nothing which she could lose on his acconnt.

Our adorning the Lord who wields the cakra, who is beyond the ken of even the most wise and his coming and accepting us are by no means new arrangements freshly instituted for our sake. Hence your sentiments condemning my approach are unjustified, says the nāyaki. In the stanzas speaking of the hero, the excellences of the Lord and the sanctity of places where he resides, such as Vēṅkaṭam, Tenkuḷaṉtai and Kuṭaṉtai, are mentioned. Even the celestial beings are unable to comprehend his greatness fully. Such a person has deprived me of my beauty and has not granted me tulasi garlands; still we have to make our appeals to him alone. To whom else could we unburden our minds and plead? Making me call out his holy names in plaintive terms, he neither shows his form nor tells me how to reach him. Still, however long it may take, I shall struggle on and shall not return without seeing him; this I say on oath.

I have no more any relation (connection) with you. You need not tender any advice to me. Since I cannot see him unless I break off all bonds with everything other than the Lord, I have no more love for the parrot and other birds that I used to nurture. To that God of gods who showed the wonderful form of vāmana of unsurpassed beauty and stole my heart, I have offered all my wealth in

the shape of my modesty and the like. There is nothing else for me to lose; even my mind had already left me saying "I have no more contact with thee", and captivated by his beauty, it reached his blessed feet. What can I do now? This section differs from the previous ones in that it not only describes the course of love, but also treats of the Lord – the hero – his beauty, greatness and excellence.

*Mālai-ppūcal (Distress at dusk)*: The Āḻvar experiences in himself singly such intense sorrow as afflicted all the young damsels of Āyppāṭi at the non-return of Kaṇṇan at dusk. Tiruvāymoḻi (9-9) gives a beautiful account of it in the ten stanzas commencing with the words "Mallikai kamaḻ tenṟal". How, the objects that are normally a source of pleasure to the generality of mnakind cause instead infinite misery to the nāyaki suffering from the pangs of separation from the hero and anxiously awaiting his return is described in this subsection. During the day, the pain of separation is somehow borne. But evening sets in; and still the hero is not seen. Then her sorrow greatly intensifies. Then even pleasant things such as melodious music (kuṟiñci icai), cool southerly breeze, moonshine, the roaring of the sea, anṟil bird, and the captivating (mellifluous) music of the flute play a different role; they cause untold misery. How they make existence intolerable is depicted with pathos.

Twilight, dusk, is the period of especial pleasure for lovers. It is a matter of common knowledge that there are many akapporuḷ songs describing how at dusk lovers pour out their minds in loud laments at their forlorn state. In Tiruvāymoḻi we meet songs of unsurpassed poetic excellence describing the twilight scene and its gnawing effect on the mind of the distraught maiden.

The southerly breeze which in itself, is agonizing is now blowing laden with the fragrance of the Jasmine; thus reinforced it pierces my body. Not seen by the eye, it affects the nostrils and the body (skin). While this is peripheral, the entrancing music enters the mind through the ears and tortures it. Thus apportioning the work between them, they seek to destroy me in and out. When the sun sets, the evening time that ensues causes much mental confusion (craziness). The clouds at dusk appear partly red and partly black resembling in part the lustre emanating from his bodily form; it consumes my body. We know of no place where we could go to escape their clutches. We experience utmost misery from their torture. We are in the most unenviable position having neither the joys of the world nor the bliss of union with the hero; and this most miserable existence, corresponding to dusk which cannot be treated as day or as night is aptly called 'twilight misery'.

Just as the regiments which in the earlier stages of a war attacked different regions of a country, combine together in the crucial stages of the war, and attack with full force, the objects and situations which individually caused misery to the nāyaki combine together at dusk and torture her in full force. The sound of the bells tied round the necks of the cows returning home at dusk, the southerly breeze, the fragrance of flowers and the like–whose very names make her to shudder – eat into her vitals. The evening that follows as the day terminates, beautiful sandal paste, melodious tunes like pañcama and mullai paṉ, the cold wind and the like torture her. "One who protected the whole world when beset with the catastrophe of pra̤laya does not now come for my rescue when I am in distress. "In a mood of despondency the nāyaki cries" How am I to seek protection? Even if I close my eyes in order not to see them, his

lotus-like eyes, beautiful lips, dark tresses and his four shoulders appear before my mind's eye and torture me."

She says that the breeze that is the fountain of bliss, the moonlight beautiful to look at, the soft flower bed whose very thought generates joy, and others like these lose their normal qualities and change into instruments of torture (begin to afflict her cruelly). Her body and feminine nature have been shattered beyond description. Sorrow has passed beyond the limits of bearability by the body. Even her mind does not help her now to draw some comfort. Such is her extreme distress. "Evening when cows are to return has come; but the heart of the shepherd has hardened into stone, sweet melodies from his flute kindle the smouldering fire of anguish. The companions too are depressed in mind. How is my life to be saved? His grace is not forthcoming. Only if it comes, could life be saved".

"Where to go and seek protection? What is the thing to do now? To whom shall I communicate my woes? Oh! mothers," this is the nāyaki's lament. The objects mentioned above have combined together and even from a distance they torture her. Of these the northerly wind is the most oppresssive. The havoc wraught by the north wind is described in many of the Akam poems. Is not the well-known poem Neṭunalvāṭai' a description of the northerly wind? "The foremost enemy is the northerly wind; taking as its allies fragrant incense (of akil), melodious tune of the Yāl, the tune called pañcama, cool and fragrant sandal paste, and wafting the fresh smell of jasmine, the bleak wind aims its relantless blows at me even from a distance". Thinking of the song emanating from his flute, the nāyaki says "I am unable to bear it, suffering is my lot; the dusk that eats the very life of the deserted lover has arrived; but the wonderful Lord is not come, Alas!" is the loud lament of the nāyaki.

The concluding stanza of this section gives a moving account of the things that torture her at dusk. Bulls and cows that have eaten to surfeit are running homeward happily jumping and frisking, to the accompaniment of the sound of bells tied to their necks. The sounds of the flutes of the shepherds calling the cattle home make me heave in sorrow; the bussing of the bees that gather honey from the jasmine and other flowers is heard; the waves of the sea rise sky high and set up a mighty roar. Situated as I am in their midst, forsaken by him, what am I to do to save myself?" is the lamentation of the nāyaki. The pitiable state of the separated lover at dusk is thus clearly depicted in this section.

*(Kālaippūcal) – Heightened misery at dawn – ( 10-3 )* A more intense state of misery than that experienced at dusk is felt at dawn. It is described in (10-3) commencing with the words 'Vēymaru'. At the approach of dawn the gopis are paihfully reminded of Kaṉṉan's departure from their midst in the past at day break and of the various phenomena that are occurring then, such as cool breeze, the song of cuckoos, peacocks' dance cows and calves spreading all over the grazing fields. Feeling certain that he would leave them now, they show sadness in thier face in anticipation even when he has not actually left for the fields. Is it not very difficult to remove such a distress?

The nāyaki presents a moving account not only of the way in which the thought of Kaṉṉan's impending departure from their midst, tortures her mind but also of the extreme distress to which she is subjected by such factors as the cuckoo's songs. Her shoulders which he had often times praised are drooping. Her depression is peculiar and very different from what afflicts the generality of mankind: Her limbs thin even when Kaṉṉan is near: They sense his

absence. Without knowing all this, the cuckoos sing an aggravate her sorrow. Without the least sympathy for her, large numbers of peacooks in the company of peahens dance with delight.

"Oh! Kaṇṇā! though the duration of your absence for grazing the cows, so deeply attached to you, is but the day time, a day appears to me several ages," says the Nāyaki in grief. By his loving look he seems to suggest "I have not left" (why shoud you feel miserable?). With great feeling, she says, "Rather than torment me by that look of thine, it is far better you go to graze the cows. You have not chosen to favour us. Kaṇṇā! this is unbecoming of your benevolence".

To strengthen her drooping spirits, Kaṇṇan gave concrete evidence of his love for her, in an embrace. The bliss of this happy union assumes mighty proportions, it becomes greater than the earth and sky; but quickly the realisation comes; it is but a dream; and leaves her in deeper gloom. She says "I am indeed miserable". 'Will you kindly give up grazing cows?" "If you go grazing cows, I shall perish". She heaves a sigh and says that her mind which has become all dry is being burnt up by the fire of separation. There is none to help me.

Those separated from their partners may take some little comfort in seeing the object of their love in the external world (URU Veḷippāṭw). For me, even that has become impossible. He is not seen before me in his resplendent form. "It seems to me that the day does not pass; instead, it seems to stretch out. I am unable to stop the flow of tears from my eyes. This separation is death to me. It is most cruel" laments the nāyaki in the manner of the heroine of *peruṉtiṇai*.

Your sweet, nectar - like words themselves torment me. Addressing him, she says "Kaṉṉā! you deserted me". Spreading tha fragrance of jasmine, the north wind under the garb of the cool southerly breeze wafts; and allowing it to go first, the mad elephant called evening has come. She prays that Kaṇṇan must come, embrace her and offer protection. The following is a bald rendering of this wonderful prayer :-

"You must allow my lovely breasts to get the fragrance of mullai flowers that adorn your beautiful chest along with the Kaustuba gem; you must give me nectar of your lips and place thy most beautifull, lotus-like hands on my head" (10-3-5). The dignity with which the nature of union is expressed is worthy of attention.

Thereafter, she says, "I know there are many young damsels who look upon his feet as their refuge; but, for our part, we cannot live in isolation from you; the flow of tears from our eyes would not stop, our heart is not firm; to us who can't bear even a moment separation, your departure to the woods to graze cattle would mean certain death; my life is melting like wax caught up in fire". Then, forgetting her woes, out of great concern for his welfare, she shudders at the thought that asuras might attack him in the woods and feeds miserable. Next she says "It would be sufficient if he lives in their vicinity along with the young women dear to his heart". This thought is the peak of true love. Akam poetry seldom contains references to such an opinion expressed by the heroine to the hero. Tolkāppiyar is of the view, if such an opinion is expressed elsewhere, it must be deemed as conveyed in a sulky mood[15].

Higher still is the phase where the nāyaki says, "we shall be most happy as long as we see you free from

suffering and in enjoyment of bliss. We do not care to have that womanly feeling which would work go against your joys. We are not such as would like to draw you away from your sweet hearts. Is that not the mentality of sūrpaṉaKā? When you go out grazing, the agents of Kamsa, the asurās in different guises prowling in the woods attack you; and a fierce war between you and the asuras may ensue. We are greatly afraid of that contingency. Therefore, we earnestly beg of you not to go.

Preferring life in the midst of cowherds to stay in Paramapada, you showed great interest in grazing cows; but my mind is scorched by the thought of the dangers that beset this occupation. It is as if Kaṇṇan, wore a smile on the face in appreciation of the nāyaki's expression of abiding love and concern for him. This puts some cheer in her and she exclaims "Oh! our Lord with beautifullips! God of the Āyarkula!". *Kālaippūcal* is the technical name given to this phenomenon of the nāyaki showing, even in the presence of hero, extreme distress on account of his impending departure from her midst. Obviously it marks a stage of misery more intense and tormenting than the previous stage.

*(D) The Companion's Utterances (Tōḻikūṟṟu) - 3*

In the literature of Aiṉtiṇai the companion finds an important place. The companion is indispensable for effecting a union between the hero and the heroine and for bringing about their marriage.[16]

A true understanding of the relation of the soul to God, the realisation that the soul is the servant of the Lord (that he exists to subserve the Lord's purposes) and that knows of no master other than the Lord (ananyārhas'ēsatva) is indispensable for being united with the Lord.

That the Āḻvār has attained that state of knowledge (sambandañāna) when this apprehension of relation takes place is indicated in the stanzas setting forth the companion's views. There are three such occasions in Tiruvāymoḻi. Both in Akam literature and Akam grammar, the companion of the heroine is represented as playing a leading role and expressing her views at three important stages (1) in stopping veṟi dance (2) in seeing to it that no thing happens to affect the chastity of the heroine (revelation with virtue and (3) while helping for the elopement of the heroine with her lover.

In Tiruvāymoḻi too, on three occasions, the companion effectively intervenes; and there is thus agreement to a certain extent between Tiruvāymoḻi and Akattiṇai in this respect also.

veṟiyāṭṭu vilakkal – 'stopping the veṟiyāṭṭu'

Tolkāppiyar speaks of veṟiyāṭal thus :–

'Veṟiyaṟi ciṟappin vevvāy vēlan
Veriyāt tayarnta kāntaḷum'[17]

veṟi – āṭṭam is taken as a mode of dance common alike to *Akattiṇai* and *Puṟattiṇai*. A wielder of vēl would carry it and dance. Veriyāṭṭam was possibly a social custom among people of hilly tracts. People must have entertained the belief that Muruka, the deity of the Kuṟiñci region, enters the person of the priest (pūcāri) or of any of the votaris and through that medium conveys to the people his message (what he desires to say). This must have furnished the basis for this practice, referred to as an *Akattuṟai*.

The heroine who has entertained a deep love runs down in body on account of separation from the lover. Her mother and others set out to ascertain the cause of her bodily changes. This investigation may take one of two forms. The soothsayer kaṭṭuvicci – may be asked for her

opinion as to the real cause of the heroine's bodily deterioration. Or, the *pūcāri*, the priest of the temple of Muruka, may be interrogated. This pūcāri, vēlan, would say that the malady is caused by Muruka, and that if he is given the offerings due and worshipped, and if veṟiāṭṭam (a sort of dance) is arranged the trouble would be at an end.

There are many interesting facts about the stage whereon this dance is enacted and its modes (and rules) in Akam songs. Cutting the neck of the goat and filling the place with the cereal tinai, to the accompaniment of many musical instruments, the deity is worshipped.[18] Rice offerings are prepared in may colours; a young lamb is killed and the blood is smeared in the forehead of the ove-sick lady; Muruka is worshipped and the offerings made.[19] Elderly women of the place predict that if the worship of Neṭuvēḷ is fervent and continued (sustained), the heroine would get well Thereupon, a stage is put up and the deity is decorated with Kaṭampa garlands; and to the accompaniment of many songs, Tinai and goat with blood gushing are offered to Murukan.[20] *Murukāṟṟuppaṭai* also speaks of the tinai and floral offerings along with the goat to worship the Vēlan. All these verses are intended to portray the steadfast love and chastity of the heroine.

Tiruvāymoḷi (4-6), beginning with *Tirppārai yāmini* expresses the state of mind of the Āḻvār in the words of the companion. Having been united with God and then left alone, the heroine feels extreme sorrow. Through excessive love and inability to bear separation, she is dazed. Mother and other relatives interrogate the vēlan as to the cause of the daughter's sickness, learn that it may be due to the mischief of godlings (evil spirits) and are told that they are to be propitiated in the way prescribed for their

appeasement (through toddy and animal offerings), and in their anxiety to find a cure at once they prepare to take these extreme steps.

At this stage, the companion tells them that what they propose doing would not only be powerless to cure her of her malady, but would actually aggravate it and cause her ruin. She commends, on the other hand, the practice of repeating the Lord's holy names and of spreading of the dust of the feet of God-lovers on her (i.e. through Service to bhāgavatās). Likewise, when the relatives consult a soothsayer, she suggests some remedies for the sickness; but the companion who knows the real cause of the malady denounces these measures also as futile.

The companion, a genuine friend and guide, anxious to ward off any trouble befalling the heroine, investigates, like the relatives, into the cause of the sickness add her findings are that it is nothing malignant, but quite a desirable sickness (divine madness) and that if she is mentally upset it is because she has lost her mind to Kaṇṇan, whose saulabaya is unexcelled; and consequently he alone is the medicine that could cure her.

Moreover, says the companion, her malady, her mental upset, is to be attributed to the Supreme Lord; on the contrary, you attribute it to the minor deities and godlings and think of appeasing them by dance, liquor and the like. All that is futile. If you talk of the conch, the Cakra and the like which are exclusively His insignia, you can save her life. She enumerates all the propitiatory acts they intend to perform to small deities and exposes their futility and thereby prevents them from the contemplated acts. That is why this item of service rendered by the companion is called veṟivilakku or 'preventing acts of propitiating deities and

godlings.' Misled by the wild words of the soothsayer, don't adopt improper modes of worship, offering toddy, meat and the like, warns the companion. Praise the blessed feet of the most wonderful Lord, who delights in wearing tuḷasi.

The reprehensive modes of worship include such acts as offering food of different colours, dancing through āvēsa (possession by spirit), worshiping by offering such vulgar things as toddy and meat; and dancing to the tune of the drum. Instead of all this, repeat his names, spread the dust from the feet of godly folk, engage in the effort to do this and revere those learned in the vedas. I refuse to witness lowly forms of worship. Praising the feet of Kaṇṇan in the proper way is conductive to lasting bliss; that is the only potent medicine. If you do this, she would be rid of her ailment and she will worship him and be for ever dancing in joy; says the companion.

The various ways of trying to propitiate the minor deities referred to in this section, except the offer of toddy are mentioned in the veṟiyāṭṭam described in Akam verses too.

The basis for (veṟivilakku) 'preventing the relatives from trying to appease the minor deities' is the statement.,

'Avanai allāl unnittu maṟṟoru teyvam toḻāḷ'(4–6–10) meaning 'she will worship no other deity except the supreme being'
It is a testimony to the unsevering chastity, one pointed devotion, of the nāyaki.

*The heroine's exclnsive concentration* : That the Āḻvār Nāyaki has lost soul completely to the God at Tulaivilli maṅkalam is intimated to the mother by the companion. This is the main theme of the subsection starting with the

words "Tuvaḷil māmaṇi" (6-5). While all other sections speak of the Lord, a special feature of this section is that it deals with the extreme devotion of the Āḻvār. It is the mother who took the daughter to this holy spot and to the Deity thereof. Hence, she always talks of the Lord with lotus-like eyes, and the "Lord of the deities" indicating His accessibility and greatness and feels restless. Seeing all that the mother is upset; and fearing that she might lose her daughter, she goes to the companion and seeks her advice as to the best means of saving her. The companion says 'there is no use attempting to rescue her. If at all, efforts to mend the situation must have been taken earlier. Now you have to give up your hopes of getting her round. Instead, stand by her and take steps to make her live'. This, in brief, is the gist of the advice tendered by the companion.

The hero might get off saying that his town is not far off. The nāyaki thinking pathetically of the Lord, contemplates on His village or town (holy place) with its lofty buildings set with spotless gems. She keeps on looking at them. She is all the time offering worship to the holy place. Therefore, even the mother, despite her relationship, must not compel the daughter to get away from that, in consideration of her well developed mental attitude, says the companion. Give up your idea of dissuading her from her purpose. Her mind is made up once and for all. She is constantly speaking of - speaking in low tones, because she has lost all strength - his wonderful weapons and his lotus - like eyes. Her eyes shed profuse tears; and she is unable to prevent that; she bows, prostrates, with her body; she attempts to speak, with her enfeebled mouth, of the beautiful weapons and bodily form of the Lord who captivated her mind; her mind is feeling utmost enxiety to join him; thus her body, speech and mind are all centred on him has been expressed in this portion.

As if to impress on the mother that the cause of the daughter's infatuation is her own action, the companion says "they took her to Tulaivillimaṅkalam during a special festival season". As a result she has been rendered actionless. If she says anything at all, with quivering lips she utters the name 'The God of Gods', overwhelmed by the thought of his saulabhya; and with tears gushing from her eyes, she stands like one possessed. To take her again to that place and to lose all interest in her are just the same, says the companion. She is all the time prattling only about his wonderful deeds. Losing the bounds of modesty, she has excessive devotion to the Lord. All the words that she utters are the holy names of the Lord. In uttering them, she feels no difficulty; her mind delights in dwelling on them. After you have shown her his attributes, tears pour like rain from her eyes. Her mind absorbed in the contemplation of his excellences, she has now been captivated by his lovely form and she is ever looking in that direction and bowing (offering obeisance); she refuses to look elsewhere; whatever she says is a description of his wonderful beauty of form. She has gone beyond control and listens to no other word except Tulaivillimankalam. I am unable to say whether this is due to the good deeds, she has performed in a former birth or to the mysterious influence of the beauteous form of the blue-hued God on her. Through her constant reference to his insignia and his holy names they acquire even greater glory.

From the day, she worshipped this place of especial sanctity, upto this, she has been repeating (prattling about) his name only and thereby not only her body, but also her mind have been wasting. Her mind sore, lips quivering and eyes dazed, she cries out in an agonising manner "Oh Maṇivaṇṇā!". At this even trees seem to sympathise with her. Observing such a deep concentration of her affections

on the Lord, one wonders whether she is an incarnation of Nappinnai' or Mother Earth or Goddess Laksmi. She calls out "Netumāl"; bows with her head; listening to the name of that sacred place is the one and only occupation of her mind. What a wonder!

*Arattoḻu niṟṟal* (Revelation with Virtue): 'Arattoṭu niṟṟal' is of special significance in Akapporuḷ. With the sole object of safeguarding the chastity of the heroine, clear rules are laid down specifying who should, and at what stage, and inregard to whom do or say certain things. What is done should be such that it does not adversely affect either the heroine, or the hero or the companion or any other concerned. It may be that the companion talks to the mother of the heroine with her previous consent. She informs the mother that her daughter has already been united in mind with the hero; and she puts this in such a way that it does not cast a slur on the heroine, nor lower the prestige of the hero, nor cause any defect on her part.

In Tiruvāymoḻi (8-9) this phenomenon is described as taking place in the same manner. When the parents of the heroine are arranging to give the daughter in marriage to some one else or when betrothal is about to be arranged – in order to prevent that the companion tells the parents that in a pleasant and persuasive manner, the heroine has already contacted someone, and that she would not care even to think of any other; and that their efforts would only cause her misery. In this wise, the companion breaks the news of the haroine's *kaḷavu,* choise of a hero after her heart. An inimitable description of the part played by the compa- nion is found in *Tiruvāymoḻi* (8-9). The suggestive character of the whole conversation is a remarkable feature. The companion is generally said to perform the function of

Aṟattoṭu ṉiṟṟal with the *cevilittāy* but here in Tiruvāymoḻi, it is with reference to 'mother' in general.

Finding that the mother and other women are engaged in finding out the cause of the change in the heroine, the companion makes it appear that she too has been trying to ascertain the root of the malady and has reasons to believe that the heroine has been united with the Lord of Tiruppuliyūr; for she is ever talking of his perfections and deeds; therefore it is best you desist from your proposed action (i.e. casting for some other husband or going ahead with the arrangements for giving her in marriage to someone else), says the companion. The heroine talks of none else but the Lord of Tiruppuliyūr. What can I do? asks she, suggesting that she came to know of this prior meeting or connection only just then. The companion then adds, the daughter is all praise for the flower garden of Tiruppuliyūr. This is intended to throw the hint that the heroine must have met him in that garden.

In the second stanza she intimates that she is praising the beauty of the person to whom she has lost her heart. The following stanza speaks of his various deeds of valour. Is it not natural for the heroine to dwell on the prowess of the person who has captivated her? It is not sufficient if he is merely a man of might. At pralaya, He protected the whole world and later created it again. This is suggestive of *puṇal taru puṇarcci*. An adequate reason for choice of a partner is hinted in it, namely, he is a protector in times of trouble. Then his infinite riches and his generosity in making gifts are mentioned. These are clear indications, says the companion, in the heroine that she has already united to him. As if in answer to the mother desiring to know if he loves her daughter, the companion says his country itself is of that nature; there even the

trees and plants stand intermingled. Nature is described in such a fashion that the suggestion is skilfully made that love pervades the place.

Should he not be a man of character? What do you say of this man? asks the mother. The companion is ready with the answer - the residents of the place are all men of character. It is easily observed from the diligent fulfilment of their duties by all those proficient in the vedas. 'Quite apart from all these, there is a more convincing or valid reason for giving your daughter in marriage to Him', says the companion. 'Your daughter is the recipient of the grace of the wonderful Lord of Tiruppuliyūr'. 'How else', she asks, 'could you account for the cool, refreshing fragrance of tulasi on her body? Therefore, why need any futher proof that she is eminently fitted to wed the Lord of Tiruppuliyūr'. Pleading thus, she prevents the mother from carrying out her resolve. Thus, the part played by the companion in averting what threatened to go against the heroine's chastity is commendable indeed. Incidentaly it may also be noted that this is the only section in Tiruvāymoḻi, where the utterances of woman have a pleasant ending.

## *(E) The mother's utterances*

It is the literary tradition of Akapporuḷ to refer to the natural mother as naṟṟāy and to the mother that brings up the child as *cevilittāy*. Several stanzas purporting to be the '*sentiments of cevilittay*' are found in Akapporuḷ works. But *Tiruvāymaḻi* does not make this distinction. There are many sections where the mother's sentiments of sympathy at the daughter's condition are stated. In seven sections of Tiruvāymoḻi, cast in the form of the mother's utterances her sympathy figures largely. The following subsections (4-4) 'Maṇṇai iruṉtu tuḷāvi' and 'Kaṭal ñālam ceytēnum'

(5-6) respectively deal with the nāyaki's most intense love for the Lord and the mother's doubt whether the daughter's state of mind is due to spirit possession (the Lord's āvēsa.) Tiruvāymoḻi (7-2) 'Kaṅkulum pakalum' describes how the mother asks the hero, what do you intend doing for her? This is a novel feature, it is not found in any of the Akapporuḷ works. In Akam works it is not customary to represent the mother as talking on behalf of her daughter to the hero. But Tiruvāymoḻi (2-4) 'āṭi āṭi' and 'kaṅkulum pakaḷum' (7-2) represent the mother as directly confronting the hero.

In the earlier stanzas we find descriptions of how on account of intense grief, the Āḻvār sends messengers to the Lord (1-4), and then looking upon all objects round him as suffering from a like separation from the Lord and expresses his sympathy for them too (2-1). At the next stage, the pangs of separation become so intense, that he is unable to bear the loneliness and gets into the frame of mind of a nāyaki and is so overpowered by feeling that she is unable even to describe her agonizing state. The mother who is by her side questions the hero. The Āḻvār adopts this device of making the mother describe her daughter's state of mind. The description is as moving as it is superb.

How the hero is hard-hearted and shows no sympathy is indicated through subtle suggestion. The mother says that pining in sorrow that melts the mind, singing his praises, by shedding tears and seeking him all over and crying out for Narasiṅka, the daughter is wasting away. Her only desire is to see you; For you who effortlessly cut away the thousand limbs of Bana, is it difficult to remove the hindrances to her attaining you? You are indeed heartless. Like wax and fat in contact with fire, she melts, wax and

fat are charred if put into fire. But if they are far away, they harden; if they get near they melt. Her life does not depart; nor is she able to bear the agony and is intensely sick. Here is a very difficult state – you must sympathise with her; but you don't do that. Else I must prevent her from getting into this frame of mind. What am I to do? For the sake of Sita you destroyed Laṅkā; this deed of yours makes her sad. Distraught in mind, out of extreme love, she makes obeisance to him, Even after seeing her eyes filled with tears, and her lips quivering, you have not chosen to give her your tulasi garland. Is this worthy of you? asks the mother.

At that stage, the nāyaki says in her lamentation that he is indeed worthy and great and that he is the sweetest nectar to her soul. The mother says that her daughter who would not divulge the love longing that is in the recesses of heart has been made to proclaim it loudly and call out for him only on account of his deceitful nature. Her mind is dazed; the inner recesses of her heart have dried, and are burning as it were. All this is the result of her taking refuge in you, She is unaware of the rising or the setting of the sun; all that she knows is the fragrance, the coolness and the honey of tulasi and kind things. Oh! most beautiful Lord, wielding the cakra! What is it that you contemplate doing for this most sensitive, delicate daughter of mine? It is your duty to lend your benevolent look on her, who lives because of you (or who is your life), The mother winds up the subsection saying "Ivaḷ ṉōkkinai oṉṟum vāṭṭénminē!". In this manner, the mother expresses her sympathy for her daughter in dire distress.

The stanzas commencing with the words 'pālanāy ēḻulaku (4–2) contain the mother's account of her daughter's forlorn condition. Talking of the wonderful deeds of the Lord

in earlier epochs and in different places, the nayaki wants to experience them here and now. She sings and longs for the tulasi at the feet of the Lord reclining on a small banian leaf after swallowing the seven worlds at praḷaya, and languishes at not getting it. Even if there are obstacles to his protecting me, can't he the protector of all, who played *kuravai āṭṭam* with the young āyar damsels of my age, offer me at least the tuḷasi placed at his feet? What is the difficulty in helping me, when he has protected not one village but tread the entire world including all the dēvas and sages? If it be replied that the time of that incarnation is past, she says "I seek the tulasi of the Paramapada Nāta who is ever present". If she is told, it is impossible to get it, my young daughter asks in agony: 'For an āyar girl like me (for Nappinnai) Kaṇṇan embraced and crushed seven fierce bulls; can't he give me the tuḷasi at his feet'. More than that, he assumed the form of a boar for the sake of rescuing mother Earth hidden deep down in the seas; I long for the tuḷasi at the feet of that Boar.

She is thus, all the time, talking about it and getting mad over it. She hungers for the tuḷasi that adorns the feet of one who has Laksmi in his chest. She longs for the tuḷasi at the feet of the Lord who burnt up Laṅkā with his arrow, for the sake of Sīta. Mothers: you too have been bringing up girls. How can I describe my daughter's peculiar nature? Always, night or day, she is harping on things like the conch, the cakra, tuḷasi. What am I to do? She is not in a position to listen to my words; she is no longer under my influence; she says 'place the tuḷasi found in Kaṇṇan's feet on my beautiful, golden breasts', concludes the mother.

Again in Tiruvāymoḷi (4-4) 'Maṇṇai iruṉtu tuḷāvi' the mother says that whenever her daughter happens to see

objects resembling the Lord or those similar to things connected with him she considers them as God or godly things, gets mad after them and is steeped in distress. The attitude of seeing God in all things, a characteristic mark of a spiritually well advanced mind, is portrayed in a matchless way. The mother reports that whenever the daughter comes across the earth, the sky, the sea, the sunp fire, wind, the moon, hill, clouds, young fat calf, young snake, pot-dance, sound of the flute, butter, the world, upright mark in the forehead, tuḷasi garland, brightly coloured shapely objects, temples, godly folk (sanyaṣins), herd of cows and the like, she considers them to be God himself or those connected with Him. This attitude persists at all times, in lucid moments no less than in times of excitement. Such is the picture painted of the mind of the Āḻvār-nāyaki by the mother.

She is dazed; looks all round; looks far into the distance; perspires; sheds profuse tears; breathes hard (droop's down), feels tired; calls out Kaṇṇā; cries aloud "Lord! come". What can I do to my daughter who is under the spell of intense love? Unable to think of a remedy, the mother feels depressed.

At the next stage, the nāyaki considers herself to Kaṇṇan and refers to his activities as her own. The mother describes this state of the daughter in the subsection commencing with "Kaṭal ñālam ceytēnum yānē (5-6). She says, she is knowledge, its fruit and *mūlamantra*; she calls herself Rudra, the Four faced Brahma, the dēvas and Indra; she says she is heaven, hell and mōkṣa and also the cause of these. The mother suspects that the cause of all this blabber is perhaps due to possession (*āvēsa*) by the Lord. These two decads describe the special features of the Āḻvār's bhakti in a unique fashion. There is hardly another statement equal to this.

Tiruvāymoḻi (6-6) "Mālukku Vaiyam" describes how on account of excessive sorrow, the nāyaki and her companion become unconscious. In her efforts to bring the heroine back to consciousness, the mother refers to what she has lost. The nāyaki has lost to Kaṇṇan her beautiful bangles, her lustrous bodily colour, her greatness, her womanly wisdom, her body, the charm lent by adornment and her natural beauty – in a word her *all*, says the mother.

Tiruvāymoḻi (6-7) "uṇṇum cōṟu" depicts the next stage in the nāyaki's God-intoxication. Here both the heroine and her mother fell into an unconscious state. When the mother recovers consciousness, the mother raves at finding the daughter missing. Though she is not found, the mother being well acquainted with her nature, says with conviction that she must have certainly gone to Tirukkōḷūr. When the heroine is not found, it is usual for Akapporuḷ works to represent the 'Cevilitāy' as going in search of her in various places[22]. Some passer by proceeding from the opposite side informs her that he saw her going with some man; thereupon, she complains that she had left without informing her and feels anxious for her safety as the way is full of hazards and contrasts her present behaviour with her past conduct and feels miserable. Such descriptions abound in Akatturai[23]. More or less this subsection of Tiruvāymoḻi proceeds on these lines.

Since Kaṇṇan is the food (sustenance), water (nourishment and betel (bliss) – in a word, everything – to her youthful daughter, the mother feels certain that she must have been talking and dreaming of his perfections, and inquiring after the way, must have reached Tirukkōḷūr where he resides She asks the *pūvai* birds whether her beautiful delicate daughter who has gone to Tirukkōḷūr would return. When she was here she used to play with

pūvai, parrots, balls, tūtai and the like and feel delighted repeating his names and teaching others to repeat them. Now with eyes filled with tears, how does she occupy her time? Talking like this, the mother is immersed in sorrow. What would the townsmen say of her? They are most likely to reproach her action in going after the most bounteous Lord of Tirukkōḷūr as passing the bounds of decency, rather than commend it as born of genuine and most welcome devotion. How strange my slender waisted maiden, beautiful innocent daughter deer like, has gathered courage to take this course.

It Is common for Akam works to describe the mother as comparing the heroine's past state with her present mental attitudes and experiences in the hero's place. Similarly, here too the mother institutes a comparison. She says, even when she was here my esteemed daughter used to forget us, but think of him, and showing no interest in the pastime proper for her age, she used to pine for his company. Now that she has gone to the Lord's eternal abode she could feast her eyes with the sight of beautiful gardens, tanks filled with flowering plants and the majestic temple set with gems, her sorrows must have been at an end and her mind must be filled with joy, illimitable. How delighted must she now feel or is she distraught in mind not finding no response from him? I am not destined to know that, says the mother in grief. Without being of help to me, my daughter whom I have nurtured has left me. The mother conjures before her mind a picture of her daughter, having reached Tirukkōḷūr, which is an ornament to the entire southern region and finding in the Lord of that place, Tirumāl, the Lord with his consort. Srī, every relation of hers, sees his lovely eyes and lips and stands with tears of joy in her eyes. while here, she was suffering day and night from pangs of

separation and was ever seen with tears in her eyes, and with delusion in mind. The mother is distressed at the thought that in her enfeebled state, the daughter must have found it exceedingly difficult to trudge all the way to Tirukkōḷūr. Imagining her walking with faltering steps in her enfeebled condition, the mother wonders whether she reached Tirukkōḷūr at all.

Whatever good things were given her, she would not touch saying they are for Kaṇṇan. Not caring for the people who are critical of her action, nor for my feelings, she has walked upto Tirukkōlūr, says the mother. She invokes the Gods as if to find an outlet for her sorrow and tell them how her beautiful and innocent daughter would not bear separation from him even for an instant and has entered on such a course of action, unmindful of the possible ill fame it may bring to the family. Such is her determination. By and large, this section follows the Akapporuḷ tradition in describing the Āḻvār's love of God.

Earlier while describing the pitiable state of the daughter the mother asked the hero "don't try her any further". Here in 'Kaṅkulum pakalum' (7-2), the mother getting into a more disconsolate state than even the daughter, asks the hero "what do you intend to do for my daughter?" The stanzas are a direct appeal to the hero by the mother. Such a direct confrontation of the hero by the mother is unknown to Akapporuḷ; and hence Tiruvāymoli deviates from that tradition in this regard.

It is true that the mother, no less than the daughter, is over wraught in mind. But then, the welfare of her daughter is her supreme concern; so out of solicitude for her welfare, she explains her real state of mind to the Lord and anxious to offer her at the feet of the Lord, she makes bold to ask him "what do you intend to do for her?".

The intensity of the heroine's love of God and her inability to bear even a moment's separation from him is described in an inimitable way in this section. Not only does she not sleep at nights, but she does not sleep during day either. Hence the mother's apt description (kaṇ tuyil aṟiyāḷ) she knows no sleep. She wipes the tears from her eyes, desiring to get a good view of His coming; this is described as her baling out the tears, such is its profusion. Most anxious to see the Lord with his conch and cakra, she says 'conch', 'cakra' and unable to complete the sentence she set out to say, she joins her hands in worship and indicates by gestures what she is unable to express in words through the uprush of feeling. Her prayer that his benevolent look with his lotus like eyes should fall on her is expressed half-way and stopped through sheer inability. How can I bear this, says she.

As he has not come, she touches the ground as if to feel whether he is coming. In that town-in the place where he resides even fishes jump about in the canal. The suggestion is that the good fortune (blessed experience) which is vouchsafed to them is denied to her daughter anxious to have experience of Nārāyaṇa. Thinking that it is her sinful deeds in the past that prevent his coming, she says if her demerits (pāpa) take form and stand before her, she would not persist in her request. As if to see whether his grace is directed to her, she calls out Dark cloud like Lord! is this consistent with your nature as a Lord of Love? Thus, the mother raises the issue whether her past deeds are going to win or whether his grace, benevolence, is going to conquer.

In the third stanza, the mother asks "Kaṇṇan! what have you done to her to make her come to this

pass?"; and she describes her daughter's present state of mind. Casting all (modesty and delicacy) reserve to the winds, she waxes eloquent over tne beauty of her lover and mentions his name in the very presence of her mother. She looks up to the heavens saying that he might come as he did to protect Gajēndra, and not seeing him, she is throne into utter confusion. Dilating on his skill in destroying all obstacles, she melts in sorrow. True, he can't be seen by the eyes, but enough of this formlesness; why can't he make himself perceptible? She asks. He has not appeared as Kākuttā (Srī Rāma) and as Kṛṣṇa but also as presiding Deities in beautiful temples surrounded by huge walls and over which the flag flies aloft. Is it all for remaining unseen? She asks. Further, she remains motionless in the place where she is left by the companions, her hands and legs senseless like logs of wood. Like the lamp flame glowing bright before extinction, she suddenly gets us, walks about and falls down, she prostrates "Love what a sad thing is love! She raves. What a heartless person, this Lord, deep and mysterious like the sea! Lord! wielder of the Cakra! pray come : pray come!" This is her constant cry. Noticing all this, the miserable mother pleads: Most benevolent Lord : What do you propose to do for my daughter? Please tell me.

Then pointing to the emergence of conflicting moods in her daughter from moment to moment, she asks "why do you cause unsettlement in her understanding like this? The daughter not being blessed with the Lord's favour is perhaps due, the mother thinks, to her own sins, and that her sins are visited in the daughter. Distressed beyond measure at finding her tender and most beautiful daughter in tears the mother gets disgusted, she does not look at the Lord and is deeply upset. She is perplexed and does not know what to do to dispel the malady of her dear daughter. It is pointed out

that the heroine says the consort of Laksmi is her very soul, the Lord who crushed the seven fierce bulls and obtained the hands of the Āyar maiden, Nappinnai, is really the Lord of love; she ever speaks of the favours he bestowed on His consorts. The mother says, she is unable to understand why such a Lord of mercy does not choose to bless her daughter even though she has taken refuge under the Lord of Tentiruvaraṅkam. But she concludes that somehow, her daughter has reached the feet of the Lord resplendent like the clouds. Perhaps the heroine had *mānasānubhava* that she has reached Him.

Thus the various traditions of Akapporul grammar have been adapted as they are found there or with slight modifications in the verses of Nammāḻvār so as to augment the beauty of the treatise.

# CHAPTER IV

## SPECIAL FEATURES OF NARRATION AND STYLE

Tiruvāymoḻi is no collection of independent poems; it is no anthology. The thousand one hundred and two stanzas it contains are closely inter-connected and the entire work shines as a well knit structure with a unity about it. Whoever studies the work with the aid of a commentary would be struck by its unity of organisation. Since the poem is cast in the form of an an̲tāti, the text has, it is clear, been handed down to us in the very order in which the stanzas were composed by the Āḻvar. That is, the sequence of the stanzas has been preserved in tact. For this reason, it is possible to take Tiruvāymoḻi as offering us an insight into the spiritual progress of the Āḻvār and also as sublime poetry.

In the opening stanza of the work, the Āḻvār dwells on the limitless excellences of the Lord and exhorts his mind to worship the blessed feet of the Lord and there by attain blessedness. The first two decads deal with the nature of the Lord, the ultimate reality, in the manner of the Sārīraka Sūtras. The two concluding decads describe the progress of the spiritual aspirant, step by step, until he reaches Paramapada. The intervening stanzas, which constitute the bulk of the work give a graphic account of the varied religious experiences of Nammāḻvār; who through God-love, Bhakti-mārga (the path of loving devotion) passes alternately between the phases of samslēsa (joy of union with the Divine) and *viślēṣa* (pangs of separation) and after a long process of abiding love and intense faith reaches spiritual perfection.

At one time, the Āḻvār describes his vision of God, tells us how he holds communion with Him: how He surrounds him and is near him, and how He dwells in his mind, arms, vocal organs, eyes, forehead, head and so on and describes the delectable experience of God union (1-9). At the next moment, the Āḻvār gets into a mood of despondency on account of separation from the Lord, and unable to bear tha sorrow of separation, he gets into the state of mind of a lovelorn lady and imagines that all the insentient and sentient things of the world are likewise, suffering from virahatāpa (pangs of separation), and pours out his sorrow in moving stanzas. (2-1).

In one place he would express his joy at union with the Lord of the celestials and compares the bliss of God union with the blending of honey, milk, ghee, sugarcane juice, and ambrosia, congratulates his mind that has been so fortunate as to be blessed with such a delectable experience. And in the very same decad he would describe his extreme anguish and pine for the day when he would be fortunate to be united with the most wonderful Lord and His devotees (2-3). These descriptions of the sharply contrasted experiences of the Āḻvār occurring in the same or in succeeding decads would confound the superficial reader and strike him as contradictory sentiments.

What could be the reason for the manifestly conflicting statements, that he has not seen God and that he has seen and embraced God? The Āḻvār himself furnishes an answer to this riddle in one of the stanzas (4-7-10). The reference to his, having seen God is to his having seen Him by the eye of prāṇa (to conceptualisation or mentalvision). The moment he seeks to contact Him through the physical senses also, he feels baulked and hence the cry 'I have seen Him not'.[1] In ten places he vouches for having seen

the Lord; but in about twenty, he speaks of hankering to see but not getting his desire fulfiiled. All these stanzas represent statements made in the state of *parabhakti*. These are efforts undertaken to lead him to higher levels of spirituality.[2] In the penultimate decad of Tiruvāymoḷi, the verse (10-9-11) with the words "Aṉtamil pērinpattu atiyārōtui Ruṉtamai" shows that he has risen to the state of *parañāna*; and in the concluding decad, 'Avāvaṟṟu viṭu peṟṟa', he stands in the highest state, namely that of *paramabhakti*. This is how proficients in Tiruvāymoḷi have sought to explain the apparent contradiction.[3] Thus the whole of Tiruvāymoḷi is one logically integrated structure.

In any work which claims to be a classic, (high quality literature) the beginning and the end should not be at variance, says Tolkāppiyam.[4] As a piece of great literature characterised by unity of structure and one held in great esteem, one must expect Tiruvāymoḷi to conform to this requirement; and this expectation is fulfilled. In the first decad of the work everything that is most essential about ultimate Reality, has been set forth succinctly and fully by the Āḷvār. The ultimate Reality is also the goal of human endeavour. Hence in the second decad he refers to bhakti as the means for attaining that goal. Tne third decad teaches that to the devout soul (bhakta) the Lord is easy of attainment.

That the path of bhakti taught in the second and third decads of the first centum is surely linked up with the goal and is in itself blisful is taught in the fourth decad 'Cārvē tavaṉeṟi', of the tenth centum. Easy accessibility, wonderful beauty of form and greatness and other excellences referred to in the opening decads as fecilltating the bhakti approach are again referred to in this decad also; and in the end prapatti is held up as the means to

supreme blessedness. The modes of worship, the mystic mantra that is to be uttered and other particulars expressed in vañcit - tuṟai in the decad of the first centum 'Vītumin muṟṟavum' (1-2) are again referred to and the discussion concluded in this regard in the fifth decad of the tenth centum, "Kaṇṇan kaḻaliṇai", which is also in vañcittuṟai metre. Up to this portion in Tiruvāymaḻi there is an account of how the Āḻvār persued his quest for the Divine. In the decads that follow there is an account of how the Lord pursued the Āḻvār; and the work ends with the attainment of mōkṣa by the Āḻvār which is no other than reaching the blessed feet of the Supreme. It is matter for special appreciation that the beginning and the end are not only not at variance but are in perfect accord even to the minutest detail.

*Taṇṭi Alaṅkāro* mentions that if a literary undertaking is to be successfully completed, it must have an auspicious beginning, an invocation, a prayerful statement of what is proposed to be set forth in the work[5]. Quite in conformity with this requirement, the first stanza of Tiruvāymoḻi fulfils all these three requirements. The words 'eḻu', 'toḻutu' and 'cuṭaraṭi' occurring in the last line of this verse, indicate respectively an invocation, worship and the subject matter of the treatise. It is noteworthy that the author of Ācārya Hṛdaya considers that this auspicious beginning is quite natural to this work of Nammāḻvār[6].

Further, it could easily be seen that most of the characteristic marks of any work of literature which lays claim to greatness are met with in Tiruvāymoḻi. Any kāvya should treat of a hero. All the incidents should centre round the hero and those connected with him. The hero of Tiruvāymoḻi is the Lord himself. This can be seen from the Āḻvārs refrence to his work as (the garland of a thou

sand verses on the blessed feet of the Lord of the resplendent hue of clouds 7-2-11) and similar descriptions. The other characters of the work are - when the Āḻvār speaks under the over-mastering feelings of love welling from within (i.e. as a love-lorn lady), the heroine, her companions, her mother, motherly people; when he speaks from the stand point of a 'ñāni', the other characters are contemporary poets, devotees of the Lord, the denizens of Āyarpāṭi, worldly folk, celestial beings, sages and so on.

The supreme Lord, the main character, the hero, is not represented as speaking directly anywhere in the work. Under the category of characters that do not speak, mention may also be made of the various agents, whom the Āḻvār sends as emissaries, namely birds, such as ṉārai, anṟil, kuruku, pūvai, the parrot and the peacock. Strangely even the clouds, the roaring sea, the seven worlds and the like that are represented as blessing the Āḻvār when he enters Vaikuṇṭa may also be included as other characters of the work. If some of the episodes in the poem are dramatised, the sun, the sea, the moon, the hill, clouds, calf, serpent, pot-dancers and others would be the dramatic personae, with no specific opportunities to express themselves in words.

It may be asked whether it is appropriate to have for the hero one, who does not speak at all. True, the Lord does not speak; but in various places, under various names, He has made the Āḻvār and others speak and is much talked about. Further, without Him, this monumental literature would not have appeared at all; hence it is most fitting that the Lord rather than the Āḻvār is the appropriate hero of this Kāvya. The Āḻvār representing the soul is the heroine. The foremost requisite for an epic is a story. Though Tiruvāymoḻi has no story element as ordinarily

understood, it may be said to narrate the story of the soul on a pilgrimage to its true home. That has been gradually described in an orderly manner in 100 decads. Though the story element is not its strong point, Tiruvāymoḻi possesses many other salient features of a kāvya set in Taṇṭiyalaṅkāram.

The aim of great kāvya, the attainment of mōkṣa, is the goal of this work also. Other items such as Iru cuṭarttōṟṟam, (2-1-6) and (5-4-4) experiencing bliss of union (4-1-5), distress at parting from the hero (6-2) are met with in Tiruvāymoḻi.

More important than all these, is its form as an *aṉtāti*, with a two-fold sequence - (sequence of thought and sequence in the words employed). Although the Āḻvār speaks of having composed it as made to do so by the Lord, from such references to it as 'Miṭaiṉta Col toṭai āyiram' (1-7-11), and 'Avāvil aṉtātikaḷāl ivai āyiram' (10-10-11), it is evident that it is like a lake filled to overflowing, unable to contain what flows in, breaking through the bunds and supplying the surrounding country much needed water. the lake of the Āḻvār's mind was filled with bhakti to overflowing and it expressed itself in exquisite poetry. Words flowed of their own accord praying fervently to the Lord that he may be accepted. Thus it was not a pre-planned effort to compose poetry but the spontaneous expression of his experience of the Divine.[7] Tiruvāymoḻi was the outlet for his spiritual feelings and is thus most natural and spontaneous. None the less, it is hard to believe that the author has no thought out or deliberate plan in organising the work. That at the very outset he had planned to shape it in the form of an aṉtāti is abundantly clear from the reference to 'Niral niṟai āyiram' very early in the work, in the first decad of the first centum itself (I-i-11).

It is beyond doubt that he follows the tradition of Tamil poetry and grammar, and the rules governing chandas. The work, divided into ten equal parts, each part having ten equal sub-divisions, has a well defined structure. It belongs to the category of 'tōl' one of the eight modes into which great poetry is classified[8]. As the Āḻvār is God intoxicated person, as his poetry is divinely inspired, his songs breathe an air of freshness and vigour. At the very outset he had planned to compose about a thousand stanzas and also to cast them in an̲tāti form and that should be crest in musical modes to serve the purposes of devotional singing and prayerful worship. It has been shown earlier that Tiruvāymoḻi-'irun̲tamiḻ n̲ūl'- fulfills all the requirements of great poetry. It is composed in pāvinams-supplemental metre-which is a new venture for a long narration. No other earlier literary work in Tamil conforms to all these designs. So it can be said to belong to the first of the two forms of poetry pointed out by Herbert Read in his collected Essays on Literary criticism. He writes 'when a work of art has its own inherent laws, originating with its very invention and fusing in one vital unity both structure and content, then the resulting form may be described as organic[9].' Tiruvāymoḻi may be said to possess the organic form which is an original poetic creation.

*The greatness of the theme or subject matter*

Let us for a while consider the nature of the theme chosen for the poem. The work is devoted to an exposition of *tattva* (reality), praise of the Divine under the prompting of true devotion and to preaching the way (hita). Unique among poets and singular among the Āḻvārs themselves, Nammāḻvār stands foremost in his clear formulation of the nature of tattva. It is commonly accepted that among the various factors that influenced and inspired Sri Ramanuja

in later times in his systematisation of Vēdāntic thought as expounded in his Srī Bhāsya, Nammāḻvār's Tiruvāymoḻi occupies a very important place[10]. The claim has been made with great appropriateness and justification that Ramanuja the propounder of the Vishistādvaitic method of interpreting the Vēdānta Sūtras largely drew inspiration from the intuitive experiences and mystic utterances of this great sage and poet, Saṭakōpa[11]. Thus succinct exposition of the nature of reality (tattva) is one of the special merits of Tiruvāymoḻi. But, then, the question arises whether the author of Tiruvāymoḻi is greater as a poet or as a philosopher. We may answer that he combines both the roles in an inimitable way and that he is a great seer who expounds the nature of truth in unsurpassed poetry.

Had he not taken upon himself the arduous task of expounding philosophical truths, but chosen other themes would not his poetic genius have shone even more brilliantly is a legitimate question to ask. Exposition of philosophical truths is indeed hard; it provides little scope for feelings and cannot hope to interest the reader and to appeal to his sentiments. The question arises whether or not the poetic talent of the exponent of *tattva* has been diverted or deflected from its legitimate field and to that extent suffered? This necessitates a consideration of the basic question, what is the legitimate province of poetry by concentration on which poetic gifts could yield fullest results?

Some may give pride of place to ideas and some to feelings; but both are indispensable for poetry. They are great poets who compose enjoyable poems; but those whose creative art not only produces enjoyable poetry but also succeeds in imparting noble truths are distinctly greater. Landor says, "We may write, little well, and accumulate

one upon another, but never will any be justly called a great poet unless he has treated a great subject worthily''.[12] Accepting this formulation, W. H. Hudson, the well known literary critic, concludes, "We do not, therefore, quarrel with any poet who offers us philosophy in the fashion of poetry. We require only that his philosophy shall be transfigured by imagination and feeling; that it shall be shaped into a thing of beauty; that it shall be wrought into true poetic expression; and that thus in reading him we shall always be keenly aware of the difference between his rendering of philosophic truth and any mere prose statement of it. These conditions fulfilled, we welcome the poet as teacher and moralist, because we know that in his hands the truths of life and conduct will acquire a higher potency and value[13].

As Hudson says, Nammmāḷvār has not only expounded philosophical trnths with feeling and imagination but also with remarkable simplicity, and clarity. so that his work is instinct with utmost poetic excellence. Thus in are comparison with other poets whol mereiy gifted with facility to make verses, Nammāḷvār is fit to rank as a great poet; and he has achieved tremendous success in expounding philosophlcal truths in immortal and sweet poetry, he is equally great as a philosopher. Philosophers are seldom poets; but when a poet happens to be a philosopher, as well, he occupies a more eminent place even in the ranks of poets. Coleridge observes, "No man was ever yet a great poet without being at the same time a profound philosopher"[14].

Therefore the poet is more influential than philosopher and is superior fo the historian; for what the philosopher expounds with the aid of logic does not easily take root in the mind of the ordinary people; but Nammāḷvār's poetic

gifts, as Ben Johnson declared, conveys philosophic truths with clarity in attractive words and in exquisite melody, that makes an indelible impression in the mind. Hence it is firmly implanted in the mind. Speaking of Nammāḻvār's song's his first and foremost disciple, Maturakavi Āḻvār, who is deeply versed in the vedas, says that the cardinal teachings of the vedas are understood with clarity and make an indelible impression in the mind when seen through the works of Nammāḻvār[14a]. So one can infer how great a poet Nammāḻvār is!.

However great a poet may be, however skilful may be the presentation, if his composition is devoted exclusively to philosophy, it would be hard to find it interesting. Nammāḻvār is not wholly preoccupied with philosophical teachings. He interspheres his teachings with other matters. He proceeds to teach mankind. Adopting the modes of *Akapporul*, he sings great ideals in the language of symbolism in an enjoyable manner. He changes the metre according to need. Appropriate use of imagery and figures of speech go hand in hand When all these are taken into account, it could be seen that he adopts all devices employed by great poets and given to posterity a great work that will endure for all time and established his claim to be an unrivalled master of the literary art.

What Vida writes about the making of great poetry confirms this view : His view may be summed up as follows : "If an identical theme is pursued too long, it would not afford joy; here and there introduce other alternative material; but with great care and skill avoid creating the impression that these items are introduced merely for the sake of making the narrative lively or interesting. In the midst of interesting episodes, convey your teachings."[15] In the progression of thought in Tiruvāymoḻi, many and manifold thoughts unfold themselves –

and all related to the Central theme and they fit quite naturally into a unified plan. The changes in thought that are observed never strike one as introduced with conscious and deliberate effort; and there is nothing artificial about it. Such is the unique feature characteristic of great poetry.

## *Mode of Presentation*

How well Nammāḻvār presents philosophical truths can be indicated by citing just a few illustrations. The first illustration:- There are three reals and there are no three independent reals, the underlying reality being only one. These are the two different views prevalent in philosophy. Ramanuja harmonises these two views, sees a common element in either and shows that when the aspect of unity is emphasised, the real is single, but when the point of view of multiplicity that enters into the organisation is considered, the real is manifold. There is a stanza in the very first decad of Tiruvāymoḻi that presents this synthetic picture. God permeates the world, says the Āḻvār, even as soul pervades the body; he adds that this is the settlep view of the luminous vēdas. When the body and the soul are taken together, the real is one; but when for certain purposes, we view either in isolation, they are two distinct realities. Since the Lord has all the sentient entities and insentient things as his body, the real is a unitary reality. But when they are looked at in isolation, there are three realities, cit, acit and 'īsvara'. This is brought home to us on the analogy of the soul-body relation (1-1-7):

The second illustration:- God has a form; He has no form. These two positions are reconciled with convincing logic and with utmost brevity in just one stanza:-

uḷan-enil uḷan avan Uruvam ivvuruvukaḷ
uḷanalan enil avan aruvam ivvaruvukaḷ
uḷanena ilanena ivaikuṇa muṭaimaiyin
uḷan irutakamaiyō ṭoḻivilan paraṉtē (1-1-9)

God exists; He does not exist-are two descriptions that apply to Him is the simple truth, and how they are equally true is clearly revealed in this stanza.

*Nature of God*

That God is the Indweller in all things without their knowing, it is beautifully explained with the aid of a simple analogy. Though He is present in all the elements, in each of the atoms of these elements, He dwells as if it were a universe; and He is present in all imperceptible objects, that is in souls, without their knowing it; and that He has the physical world and the souls as His body. In a single stanza, all this is stated (1-1-10).

Further, the Āḻvār explains in a variety of ways, how the Lord appears as all things. In (3-4) in the decad beginning with 'pukaḻum ṉalloruvan enkō', he mentions serially all categories of entities sentient and nonsentient commencing from the five elements and ending with Siva and Brahma, and asks "shall I say, He is this? Shall I say, He is that?" and so on. This is a masterly way of expressing the truth that the Lord stands as all things and all persons. Again, in the state of a love-lorn lady the Āḻvār refers to all things associated with God and says he sees God in them (4-4). This is an effective way of emphasising His indwelling presence in all things. In view of their special poetic appeal poet Subramania Bhārati has rendered these verses which rank as great poetry into English[16]. One never tires of reading these stanzas. The more one reads them, the more his appetite grows for reading them further.

A distinctly higher state of mind than that which sees God in all things is the attitude in which the Āḻvār as nāyaki speaks of all the activities of God as her own by imaginatively identifying herself with Him and speaking as if He is speaking (5–6). The two decads concerned figure as the sentiments expressed by the mother.

In another place (8-1-5), he addresses the Lord as follows - 'Even as the Dēvas far transcend finite men, you far transcend the Gods (Dēvās).' This expresses with great feeling and fervour the aspect of God's transcendence.

*Nature of jīvas* : Next comes the truth of the soul or jiva. The poet who set out to explain the nature of the jivas does not refer to it directly but speaks of the nature of God as 'Aṭiyēn uḷḷān---puṟattuḷḷān' (8-8-2) and proceeds much further in that strain. He says 'He exists in me (the servant)' in the sense 'He is in my soul'. The central idea namely that the essence of the soul is to be a servant of the Lord is stated here in an intresting and effective manner.

*Nature of mōkṣa* : Likewise, the nature of mōkṣa is clearly defined in (8-8-6) and the succeeding stanzas. In a decad devoted to an explanation of the nature of the supreme goal of life, the Āḻvār states with remarkable brevity and lucidity, what he aspires to reach, as follows :

'N̲in cemmā pāta paṟput talai cērttu oḷḷai'

Thy beautiful and glorious lotus feet should soon adornl my head'' (2-9-1).

'n̲in kaḻal yāneyta ñānakkai tā'' (2-9-2)

''Pray lend me thy helping hand of ñāna to enable me to secure they blessed feet''.

The Āḻvār chose religious truths – what is coterminous with all life – as the theme of his work. He is not one of those who composed poetry merely for the sake of composition; but had a sense of commitment.

*How the poem melts the heart* : We shall now cite a few instances to show how the poem touches the heart, melts the mind and lends special distinction to it. It is extremely difficult to render into English these moving stanzas, still the ideas embodied in some of them may be setforth.

When we read the stanzas over and again, we get some insight into their special appeal. "I am an insignificant person with no claim to merit; besides, there is no limit to the misdeeds that I have committed in the past. I address thee as the protector of all beings, one who swallowed the world at praḷaya and protected it. You are of the form of ñāna. Oh! Nārāyaṇa; Thou keepest all living beings in thy self! I beseech thee in thiswise again and again, repeating these forms of address for a long time. With my hands placed on my head, I cry out in distress; but Thou does not come to enable me to see Thy resplendent beauty of form!. If thou does not come, you could at least take me to thyself. You don't do even that" (4–7–1). This is the plaintive cry of the Āḻvār.

"How heinous and how endless are my misdeeds! Oh! Lord! my Father," you went of thine own accord, without the world requesting thee, to Mahābali, got a gift of land, measured it with thy feet! Oh! Dāmōtara! noted for Thy easy accessibility! Repeating these and crying out to Thee for so long a time my throat is parched up, and tears flow from my eyes. But Thou does not speak a single word. Even if Thou sayest "you are a sinner and are unworthy" it would be sufficient. It is my earnest desire that I

should see Thee with my eyes. If Thou comest before my eyes and utterest any word Thou art pleased to utter, it would be enough! What I am keen on is to see Thee" (4-7-3). The Āḻvār expresses in this way his irrepressible desire to see the Lord. (A reference to another aspect of this has been made in p 82 and 317).

In (5-7-2), the Āḻvār says "I have not come and attained Thee. I do not have the level of attainment of the *nityasūris* who are ever near Thee. Nor am I like the worldly minded who go the way of the senses and find their satisfaction in food, drink, and the like. Caught up in the flood of desire for reaching Thee, I am distraught in mind unable to reach Thee. What is it that stands in the way of your accepting me as Thy servant? Oh! Lord! you destroyed Laṅka to reach your consort. Solely for the sake of redeeming mankind you have come to this world and you stay in the city of Srīvaramaṅkalam, wielding conch and the disc. Pray be pleased to bless me!" "When am I to reach Thee?" is the fervant cry of the Āḻvār immersed in the distress of separation. Likewise another song portrays the poignancy of his sorrow "Oh Lord! with a lotus - Like navel from which you created the expansive worlds! Thou has feet that measured them all! Oh! Lord possessed of cool and benevolent eyes like the lotus! Oh Kaṇṇā! Oh! unrivalled master! Thou hast no Peer! Thou hast lotus - like hands for embrace! Oh! When am I to be united with Thee? (7-6-1). The 'Oh' punctuating every one of these addresses to the Lord is expressive of the extreme intensity of his sorrow.

Whenever I think of Thee, whenever I talk of Thee my mind breaks and melts; even when I sing thy excellences my inner being is burning. Oh! Lord residing in Tenkāṭkarai surrounded by cool, refreshing tanks and gardens, I am

unable even to think of the day when I shall serve thee" is the plaintive cry of the Āḻvār (9-6-2).

The following stanza expresses his intense longing to reach at once the holy spot of Tirunāvāy, which the Lord has chosen for his abode. "Oh Lord! Thou art beyond the reach even of the ceaseless endeavour of the Gods to attain Thee! You are the first among the three Gods! Thou art the protector of the unrivalled worlds! Tirunāvāy is the spot specially chosen by the Lord for his abode. I don't know who are blessed with the good fortune to reach that place! Alas! I am broke" is the very pathetic cry of the Āḻvār (9-8-9).

There are stanzas of exquisite beauty depicting how the mind of the Āḻvār who has an intense longing to see God melts as he contemplates again and again on the Lord's accessibility and Sausīlya. The Lord who captures his imagination in this manner is Kaṇṇan. A whole decad (5-10) speaks of how the Āḻvār is lost in contemplating on the boyhood līlās of Kaṇṇan. These stanzas are of such a quality as could melt even stone. Just one instance would suffice.

The astute mind of the child in the act ot suckling, sucked away the very life of the deceitful demoness, Pūtana, who came with an evil intent, decked with flowers, in the guise of a mother; the strength and vigour of the slender and most beautiful feet that kicked to death the wheel that moved toward Kaṇṇan with the aim of killing him; how he stood with tears in his eyes as he saw his mother, Yasōta coming to beat him when she heard complaints of his having stolen butter - these and other Divine activities of Kaṇṇan render him captive, says the Āḻvār (5-10-3). These are expressed in unforgettable

songs of extraordinary beauty. These utterances made in the state of illumination, not when he was overpowered by love and put into the mouth of the nāyaki or mother or companion.

Even when the Ālvār speaks as a nāyaki, stanzas of such moving tonality-why, stanzas more moving than these are not uncommon. The following are a few instances - In one place (2-1) the Ālvār thinks that even lifeless objects and creatures like birds are, like himself, experiencing intense agony on account of separation from the lord, and feels for their sad plight. These ten stanzas are unique in their sentiment and moving power and are of matchless beaty. (A reference to another aspect of this has been made already.

The nāyaki works herself up to such a pitch of sorrow at separation from the Lord as to resolve on the extreme step of riding on maṭal; but she is unable to have recourse to this as night set in; and althrough night she raves in inconsolable manner. Such an expression of sorrow would melt even the stony hearted. "Oh mind! you too have forsaken me! 'the night seems interminable' it has grown into ages'. If my kākutta (Srī Rāma) were here with bow in hand, it would not have lengthened out. (not only Kaṇṇan) but Kakuttan also does not come'. There is no other go except to die; Alas! there is no way even of terminating my life! Being a woman, on account of my great sins, I don't have even the right to terminate my life'. "Such is the poignancy of the Ālvār's sorrow (5-4-3) (Another aspect of this has been referred to already.

The verses that describe the sending of emmissaries to the lord also share this feeling tone. "Are you my Pūvai bird? Perhaps not! Oh little bird! though I bid thee

go to my Lord and convey to him my inability to bear this separation any longer, you pay no heed to it. My beauty of form and delicacy are disappearing. What is to be your fate here after? Seek some one else who would feed thee in thy beak and nurture thee." Even in that state of dire distress, she is worried about the future of that little bird. This is a fine description of tragic element (1-4-8). Vide (9-5-10)

The sub-sections 'Vēymaru tōḷiṇai' (10-3) and 'Mallikai kamaḻ tenṟal' (9-9) are also inimitable descriptions of the forlorn state.

*Diction*: "A first step in stylistic analysis will be to observe such deviations as the repetition of sound, the inversion of word order, the construction of involved hierarchies, all of which must serve some aesthetic function such as emphasis or explicitness or their opposites - the aesthetically justified blurring of disinctions or obscurity[17]".

The foregoing indicates what to look for in a study of diction. Since it helps in appreciating poetic quality, let us pay some attention to the diction of Tiruvāymoḻi. Further, does not diction furnish some clue to an understanding of the poet's qualities?

"Uyarvaṟa Uyarnala muṭaiyavan evenavan
Mayarvaṟa matiṉala maruḷinan evanavan'
—— cuṭarati toḻu teḻenmananē (1-1-1)

This opening stanza itself makes a novel approach. Instead of stating directly "be blessed by worshipping the feet of the Lord who is the abode of the highest excellences, it enjoins. "He who is possessed of the highest excellences. let the mind worship the blessed feet of that person." In English and in certain other languages such a construction is noticeable. It is alien to Tamil. Anyhow that new type

is found in the first verse itself. vide (3-6-9) and (3-7-1). What is different from common mode of speech may figure in poetry. Hence, the Āḻvār uses this novel form. There is an advantage flowing therefrom. The reasons why we should worship are stated at the outset. The attributes of the Lord that captivate his mind are indicated and this lends charm and attractiveness to the exhortation, besides making for its reasonableness.

A second feature is this - when a phrase ends with a finite verb, in the one that follows, a finite participle of that verb is used and a connection established between the two. Like speaking in convenient pauses, it serves to enable the listener to catch the meaning right. In frequent use in every day life, this device is employed by the Āḻvār also. To cite one example.

While teaching people the way to the Divine life, the Āḻvār says "Spend devotees! thy days in worship". Then he commences with the word "Spending" ; then he says worship and it is followed by "if you worship" and ends up by saying "worship would help to root out sins and help you to reach blessedness" (1-6-8).

A third kind of structure is also noticed. One stanza begins with 'aṭaivatu' to be attained; the words that follow seems to furnish an answer to the question; aṭavatu etu (what is it that is to be attained?). It is 'malarmaṅkai tōḷ' (the bosom of laksmi the lady of the flower). Likewise 'miṭaivatu' is followed by 'acurarkaḷuṭan pōr' ; 'Kaṭaivatu' (Churning) is followed by 'the sea is churned for amruta (nectar)'; "my mind breaks; it breaks because of separation from the lord (9-3-6)". This is quite a novel procedure. Here every line of these stanzas is a brief sentence. As the usual pattern of subject predicate is altered, it enhances

the pleasure of reading; and one feels this accession of pleasure as one reads the passage through.

In many stanzas the finite verb is mentioned first and then the agent or the fruit of the action is stated. The entire stanza may form one sentence. This is also a special device to invest the sentence with a certain force and clarity. Eg. A verse begins by stating what is worthy of being done, and concludes by specifying what it is.

Uṟuvatāvatu kuṭakkūttanukku āṭceyvatē" (4-10-10)

"What is worthy of being undertaken is service to him who undertook the potdance (i.e. kṛṣṇa)". Similarly the stanza starting with the words 'Cervan cenṟu' concludes by stating 'Tentiruppēreyin māṉakarē' - It means 'I would reach proceeding to the great city of Tentiruppērai" (7-3-9). Many a stanza is cast in this form. The technical name for this in books on grammar is 'Pūṭṭuvil poruḷ kōḷ'[18]. by employing such a style differing from every day usage, the feeling of the reader is stimulated.

In the decad 'Muṭiyānē' (3-8) stanzas two to six state that the organ of speech, hands, eyes, ears and prāṇa along with other senses seek to experience the Divine. It is being interpreted by the traditional commentators like this. It is shown that not only the Āḻvār but also all his senses vie with one another in their intense longing for communion with the Lord. The device adopted for this is at once novel and attractive.

The decads 'Maṉṉai iruṉtu tuḻāvi' (4-4) and 'Kaṭaḷ ñālam ceytēnum' (5-6) representing the sentiments of the mother, employ the word 'ennum' at the end of several sentences repeatedly and 'enceykēn' and 'en collukēn' in many verses respectively. This dexterous use of words serves to heighten the effect.

Similarly, fifty three times the word 'enkō' is repeated in the thirty lines of eight stanzas to impress on us the truth of the Lord appearing as all things and as all persons – a truth beyond description (3-4) why it even defies all attempts to think of it completely. This is a forceful way of presentation. The diction is simple and extremely felicitous. Talking of vaiṣṇavites, the Āḻvār says that they go about singing the praises of the Lord, dancing in ecstasy; and this is their only aim in life. The Āḻvār exhorts people to worship them and there by experience abundant life (5-2-6). This section has indeed a dignity about it. One has only to read the stanzas commencing with the words 'polika polika polika' and 'kaṇṭōm kaṇṭōm kaṇṭōm' and the subsequent verses in the same decad, to be impressed by their dignity and grandeur.

The daughter lies unconscious in utter dejection unable to bear the pangs of separation; her companion loses consciousness in sympathy; noticing all this, the mother just manages to exist thinking of ways bringing her daughter back to consoiousness; and in that state, she enumerates one by one what her daughter has lost (6-6). The stanzas that describe the daughter's condition are expressed in a special style. When a city or town is being consumed by flames, we serially report the losses – the burning of a bungalow here, the charring of a house there and so on; Even so the mother lists the manifold troubles afflicting her daughter. As the daughter is being consumed by the fire of viraha tāpa, the mother draws attention to the successive loses sustained by her daughter – her bangles, her complexion, charm, sublimity or greatness, qualities, learning and attainments, bodily splendour, brightness, femininity, beauty of form, etiquette and demeanour. A stanza is set apart for each of these; and in every verse, God is referred to by a set of three phrases. This

is in conformity with the convention followed in verses in veṇpā metre like Tirikaṭukam under the category of *Kīḻkaṇakku* poems.

*Some rare usages*: We 'Nām' is used in the second person instead of first person eg. 'Nāmituvō takkavāṟu' (6-8-4). It is used in the sense of 'Numakku ituvō takkavāṟu'. 'Naṅkaṭku' (for us) is used in the sense of 'uṅkaṭku' (for you in (8-1-11). 'Maṟṟu yān kilēn' (3-9-7) means 'I am bereft of that power' - 'Yān āṟṟal uṭaiyēn allan'. In this and in 'kiṟpan killēn' (3-2-6) 'kil' signifies power. With this as base, the Āḻvār coins these words. Except for one occurrence in Paripāṭal which is more or less like this, in no other place we find the usage. Even in Paripatal the concerned passage has got another reading. It is a rare usage. He uses it affirmatively as also negatively. It occurs in many places. A few more rare words used by the Āḻvār are given below :

Cuṉtāyam (7-8-8) Vārthai (7-5-6) Kātu-Kūtāi (9-1-9) Iṟukal iṟappu (4-1-10) Kallai-cillai (6-7-4) Nallanakaḷ (6-7-6) 'Ciṟappil vītu' (2-9-5) in the sense of ciṟappiṟku iṭamāna vīṭu (i.e. mōkṣa) that which is characterised by 'excellence' is indeed a special usage. Expressions such as the following are used by him in several places and one is led to think that he has a special liking for them.

uyarvaṟa uyarum (1-1-1, 2-7-11) annavacañ ceyum (3-7-10, 8-3-4)

mananaka malamaṟa, (1-1-2, 1-3-8) kaitalai pūcaliṭa (4-1-1, 5-1-7)

Tilata manna (6-10-1, 6-7-6, 8-9-10, 10-7-4)

cenneṟkaḷ kavari vīcum (5-8-1, 7-3-6, 4-10-5)

*Change of word forms to suit requirements of Poetry*: 'Viṭumin' (1-2-1) stands for 'viṭumin'; the initial letter is

lengthend out. In 'viyavāy' (7-8-4) for 'vīyavāy' there is shortening of the first letter. 'pāmaru mūvulakum' (7-6-1) stands for pāvam maru mūvulakum ; the first word 'pāvam' has lost the last two letters. 'Nakattāy' (9-4-7) becomes 'Nakaṉṯāy'. In Tirumokūr Āttan (10-1-6), Āttan is the lengthened from of Attan. But some take it as the Tamilised form of the Sanskrit word āpta.

*Dialectical intrusoins* : 'arcikkinṟu' (10-2-6) is used for arcikkinṟān. It occurs in a stanza describing Tiruvanaṉta-puram; in that context it is specially appropriate because it conforms to the usage in that area. Do we not notice that in Malayāḷam language even now finite verbs are used without the suffix denoting gender? This is in accordance with that practice. There is no possibility of Malayālam language being spoken there during the time of the Āḻvār; for, that language had not evolved then. Still this local touch enhances the beauty of the description. Cf 'Vakukkinṟu' (1-4-9). The Āḻvār's use of the word 'kuṟukkum' in his touch description of Tirunāvāy, a holy spot in that area, indicates that the Āḻvār is acquainted with the usages of that locality (9-8-1). 'kuṟukkum' signifies 'aṇukum'; aṇimaiyatu. The word 'aṇukum' is used by the Āḻvār in the same decad (9-8-2,9,10). Incidentally it may be of interest to know that Sri Ramanuja greatly appreciated this usage, as reported in the commentary, Īṭu.[19]

*Study of Words*: Having regard to the times in which the Āḻvār lived and to the requirements of the theme he set for his work, the Āḻvār uses in his songs a certain number of Sanskrit words. And in accordance with the practice of the times, these words are Tamilised and then employed. Eg. 'iraṇam koṇṭa tepparāvar' (9-1-4) meaning the mean folk who take back what they have let and would not help others, employs iraṇam and teppar which are adapted

respectively from the Sanskrit words ṛṇa 'taprar'. Note the following usages also. Nakkapirān (3-10-9) meaning 'one who has no clothing'; 'ṉama' meaning worship; 'pavittiran' (2-3-9) one who purifies, 'en savippār' (3-5-5), what japa they perform; 'cayamē aṭimai talai ṉinṟār' (8-10-2) meaning those who render service by nature (sayam is a corrupt form of svayam); 'canma canmāṉtaram' (3-7-7) signifies several births.

*Colloquial words:* The following are some of the colloquial and Sanskrit words employed by the Āḷvār – 'visāti' (5-2-6) for 'viyāti' (disease); 'manisar' (3-10-6) a corrupted form of manitar (men); 'Kutiri' (5-3-9) naughty girl; niccittiruṉtēn (10-4-4) meaning I had resolved; pirākkaḷ (pirānkaḷ, talaivarkaḷ); 'cātu canaṅkaḷ' (3-5-4) cātut tanmai uṭaivarkaḷ; cēmam (4-6-9) – protection; Bāvanai (3-4-10); pūcanai (2-2-4) prayer; 'mukkiyam' (6-10-9) importance; 'kañcan' for 'kamsan' (3-5-5).

*How colloquial and (other) new words are used:* From the Sanskrit words *nama*, the Āḷvār coins the new participle '*namanṟu*'; from *niscaya* he forms the verb *niccit tiruṉtēn*; from *arccanā* is derived *arcikkinṟu* which is neuter and does not refer to any gender in particular. Again it is noteworthy that words which are in common usage now, such as, vaiṣṇavam, viṣṇu, iṣṭam, kaṣṭam are Tamilised and used as vaiṭṇavar (5-5-11), viṭṭu (2-7-4) iṭṭam (2-4-9) and Kaṭṭam (7-2-4).

Even with regard to Tamil words a novel mode of usage is noticed in the Āḷvār's songs; 'ceytaruḷ' is an honorific way of expression in Tamil tradition. Somewhat in line with this tradition are the usages noted below. 'It is matter of common knowledge that the wheel which Kaṇṇan effortlessly kicked with his feet broke into bits. Equally well known is the story of the Lord in the form

of Narasimha tearing the chest of Hiraṇya with his finger nails. These episodes are referred to in Tiruvāymoḷi in several places. In referring to these episodes the Āḷvār sometimes uses the expressions 'tirukkālāṇṭa perumān' (6-9-4) and 'kai yukir āṇṭa em kaṭale' (8-1-3). The act of using the finger nails and feet is referred to by honorific expression, 'āṇṭa'. Though a boy, Kaṇṇan's activities call forth our wonder and grateful thanks and praise and hence this special usage. In some places similar usages signifying respect are noticed: (6-1-2) and (9-7-9). In yet other places, different modes of expression are noticeable. In a challenging mood he sings 'aṛaiyōinippōnālē' (5-1-1) in the sense of would he leave me and go away? Addressing God with intense feeling, while in a state of extreme anguish, he says 'kai talai pūcaliṭṭē (5-1-7) with hands uplifted and placed on his head, and in a loud tone, he talks with intense feeling of his sad plight in a moment of extreme distress.

Seeing God every where in the outer world as a result of projecting his own inner thoughts, the Āḷvār is steeped in misery. Not knowing what to do to cure her daughter of what she considers a delusion, the mother rates her for her folly. In describing her behaviour in that state of helplessness, the Āḷvār says the mother wrings her hands, goes round the daughter and inquires into several things - all actions natural to one in a state of helplessness or confusion and asks her in a threatening tone - why do you go into the courtyard? Stanza (7-7-10) indicates all this in an inimitable way.

Yet another peculiarity of the Āḷvār's diction is the brevity and directness with which it brings home to the mind of the listener what he wishes to convey. In teaching mankind what they are to do, he puts the matter succinctly and forcibly thus. -

'maṟṟonṟillai curuṅkac connōm māṉilattev uyirkkum
curṟa vēṇṭā ciṉtippē amaiyum kaṇṭīrkaḷ' (9-1-7)

There is nothing else, we have put it briefly; no one has to roam about in the wide world; it is enough if you think of God. There is nothing wrong in this is also indicated.

'Mātavan enṟenṟu ōta vallīrēl
tītonṟum aṭaiyā ētam cārāvē (10-5-7)

'*ōtutal*' and '*enṟenṟu*', 'enṟu' repeated twice, 'tītum ētamum cārā' put in that order and 'Mātavaṉ' – all these are said to convey the esoteric significance of the mystic mantra called *dvaya* in a suggestive and lucid manner.

*Other poetic excellences in Tiruvāymoḻi* : The Āḻvār addressed the Lord as Amutē! (Oh Nectar) For the reason that the very thought of God affords bliss illimitable, he addresses God as Nectar, ambrosia sweet to drink and life giving; but he remembers that it is not an altogether sufficient analogue and that God is infinitely greater. Hence he says, you are sweeter far than nectar (1-6-6). Thinking of his close relation to the Lord, he says, yennuṭaiya Amutē' my nectar (9-2-10) and 'yāmuṭai amutam' (8-4-2). Nectar was obtained when the milky ocean was churned ; but the Lord is eternal and abiding and does not come into being at any time. Hence the address 'yen Kaṭalpaṭā amutē'. (2-3-5) 'alai kaṭal kaṭaiṉta āramutē' (7-2-5). The last expression is so deftly formed that it is capable of suggesting both that nectar did not proceed from the ocean and that once it churned that ocean'. To bring out the idea that he is greater than nectar, the Āḻvār refers to it in significant expression, such as 'innamutam' (5-9-5) and 'en eṉṉam pukuṉtu tittikkum amutu' (6-10-3) (Referred in Section V).

Speaking of the bleak north wind blowing listlessly night and day as if it were itself suffering from a like love

sickeness, he describes its nature in words of great suggestiveness as follows :-

'kaṭalum malaiyum vicumpum tuḻāy empōl cuṭarkoḷ
irāppakal tuñcāyāl taṉvāṭāy (2-1-4)

It is not merely sleepless; it goes over sea, mountain and atmosphere seeking Nārāyaṇa ; that is the belief of the Āḻvār nāyaki. Even as she seeks God in Tiruppāṟkaṭal Tiruvēṅkaṭam and Sri Vaikuṇṭam, the north wind also goes out in search of the Lord - such is the subtle suggestion conveyed by the words. The story of Kaṇṇan suckling Pūtanā's breast and killing her in the process known in outline to all, is told in detail and with such matchless skill that the narration lingers in our mind. 'Okkalai vaittu mulaippāluṇṇeṉṟu (1-9-5) taṉtiṭa vāṅki cekkañ ceka aṉṟu avaḷpāl uyirceka uṇṭa perumāṉ'. The pen - picture of pūtanā holding Kaṇṇan in her hip and offering her breast for suckling with feigned affection is superb.

The Juxtaposition of the expressions *okkalai vaittu* mulaippāluṉ ṉeṉṟu taṉṭiṭa' and *cekkañ ceka avaḷpāl uyirceka* is indeed masterly.

## *Skilful narrations*

Now we shall refer to a few features of Āḻvār's skill in portrayal not classifiable under any of the heads such as nature description or similes and metaphors.

To win the hands of Nappinnai, hailing from the most leading of the Āyar families, Kaṇṇan subdued the seven fierce bulls. The Āḻvār's description of this episode reveals intimate acquaintance with the Āyar customs. The nāyaki avers that she does not care for her complexion - that of the tender shoot - which does not appeal to the foremost among the Āyars, Kaṇṇan. It is not the form that is decked in fine golden attire, that she likes. She expresses her

longing for embracing the form assumed by him for protecting all those that are to be protected. The nature of that form is described with great subtlety. His attire, says the Āḻvār, bears the stain of the fruits gathered in the forest; to protect themselves from thorns, the cowherds used to wear hides or skin; they carry on hand a bamboo barrel called *kaṭaiyā* for milking the cows if need should arise; in addition they used to carry a stick called kaḻikōl to throw and control restive (naughty) cows. Carrying all these, the cowherds used to follow the herd of cows like sanyasins and rest in places with plentiful pasture and fresh water. They used to have round their hips a kind of bell so that as the cowherd went in front, the cows could follow him hearing the sound of the bell. Such a detailed and colourful description of the ways of cowherds based on personal knowledge of their ways is of absorbing interest. Let us cite the following stanza – Kaṟaiyinār tuvar uṭukkaik kaṭaiyāvinkaḻi kōlkaic caṟaiyinār'' (4-8-4). Like wise the descriptions of shining clouds (9-7-5) and of asurās (8-10-6) are born of close obser vation and knowledge.

The love sick heroine, unable to bear the distress of separation any longer, proceeds towards the city where the hero resides. Sympathising with her, the mother describes the daughter's state of mind. As we read the description, the heroine seems actually to stand before our mind's eye in the manner presented.

"Her hands now rendered heavy placed on her slender and enfeebled hips, with deep distress, the love and affection resident in her heart pouring out as tears in her eyes, could she have the strength to walk up and reach the place?'' asks the mother (6-7-8). The daughter's mental state and her physical condition are both revealed as in an x-ray picture.

It is worth noting how nicely the Āḻvār describes in the one and the same place the extreme joy born of communion with the Lord and the intensity of desire caused by its disappearance. The Āḻvār – nāyaki speaks thus: As you are united with the breasts the joy of union grows ever greater, greater even than ākāsa which encirles all things and greater than knowledge that contains in itself both the worlds; and later all this bliss quickly vanishes like a dream or a magic show. In this state, love (devotion) penetrates every part of the mind and swells and swells as if the soul is not aṇumātra. What a wonder! (10–3–2). Here the rising tide of love and the resulting bliss are described in a subtle but definitive way.

The Āḻvār sings of what he has actually experienced. He is no poetaster. As his songs accord with real human nature, they touch our hearts. To cite but one illustration. His prayers for what he wishes his lord to do for him are stated. He must see him with his lotus like eyes, his head must be adorned with the lotus like feet of the Lord. From his lying posture, the Lord must wake up and sit along with His consort, so that all the three worlds could worship them and thereby transcend their sorrows. He should appear before him so that he could feast his eyes with the sight of His resplendent red lips. He should appear with a smile on his face. In the end, he addresses the Lord as one who removes the hindrances in the way of the celestial beings and the veritable poison to the asuras and his own nectar and addresses his petition as follows:

"Oh Lord! Thy delicate and loving feet are massaged by the beautiful Laksmi and Bhūdevi. I too, a great sinner desire to serve, iike them; therefore, take me there and else condescend to go here at least for a day" (9–2–10). Does not such as fervent appeal really touch the heart?".

## CHAPTER V

# SIMILES, METAPHORS AND OTHER FIGURES OF SPEECH

Simile is one of the powerful tools, a poet employs to communicate effectively his experiences, or ideas. As it beautifies, lends distinction to the composition, it has come to be known in later times as an 'ornament' (aṇi). Different forms of this aṇi have been recognised and their nature sought to be defined. The earliest Tamil grammarian Tolkāppiyar, mentions simile as the only figure of speech, and under this he includes the important components of various other figures of speech. According to him a simile is not only an ornament that beautifies but also an indispensable tool making for clarity of expression.[1] Similes can be ornamental as well as descriptive in their function.

In this chapter the various figures of speech such as similes and metaphors employed by Nammāḻvār in Tiruvāymoḻi are examined. Although similes and metaphors figure prominently in his works, he has not used them in large numbers as often met with in the compositions of other poets. Through the use of choice words, he expresses his emotions fully. Therefore his compositions are highly appealing, even without the help of figures of speech. The poet's inward light illuminates his writings and leaves them aglow. Along with certain traditional similes employed by his predecessors he also fashions certain novel ones. Because he has to describe God to a large extent, he feels the inadequacy of common place similes to meet such a task adequately. In many a context he uses epithets to

supplement his similes. He employs simple and short similes, as well as compound and long ones. Some times he is obliged to derive similes exclusively from his imagination – things altogether non-existent in this world (il poruḷ uvamai). Four kinds of similes – Viz. Vinai (action), Payan (effect), Mey (form), and Uru (colour) – are present in his compositions, and of these Vinai similes are comparatively less frequent.

In a certain context, the Āḷvār points out the folly of the poets, who indulge in exaggeration and unrealistic comparison, in describing the hands and shoulders of mere mortals as follows:

"Māri anaiyakai mālvarai okkum tiṇtōḷ" (3-9-7) meaning the hands are like clouds and the shoulders resemble big mountains. From this one can conclude that the Āḷvār expects poets to show great care in choosing appropriate similes. He clearly maintains the distinction between the similes used to describe man and those that describe God. He is very selective and specific in using similes.

To describe the complexion, the qualities and the glory of God, the Āḷvār gives as similes the cloud, the sky, the sea, certain flowers, minerals and metals. Examples are:

1. Puyal̲ karu ni̲rattanan (1-3-10)
2. N̲īla Mukil vaṇṇan (1-4-4)
3. Kaṭalin mēnippirān (6-1-4)
4. N̲īr purai vaṇṇan (1-8-11)
5. Pūvaikaḷ pōl ni̲rattan (6-8-7)
6. Āḻi n̲īr vaṇṇan
7. Kāvicēr Vaṇṇan (5-4-2)
8. Āṇi cempon mēni en̲tāy (4-7-4)
9. Tirumaṇi Vaṇṇan (3-5-10)

The Āḻvār describes the physical features of God as follows :

1. Kani vāyp perumān (6-1-1)
2. Cempavaḷat tiraḷ vāyan (3-5-4)
3. Kamala manna kuraikaḻal (4-3-6)
4. Tāmarait taṭaṅkaṉ (2-1-9)
5. Kaṟpakak kāvana naṟpalatōḷ (6-6-6)
6. Puṇṭa rīkaṅkaḷ pōlum kaṇṇan (6-8-7)

The aforesaid similes are conventional and evidently the Āḻvār is not satisfied with them. He wants to improve upon them.

I *Epithets qualify similes*

(a) Appoḻutait tāmaraippūk kaṇpātam (2-5-4)

(b) Peruṉtaṉ tāmaraik kaṉ (6-1-8)

(c) Karuṉtiṉ māmukil pōl mēni (6-1-8)

(d) Poṟcuṭark kunṟanna pūṉtaṉ muṭi (6-6-6)

(e) Ṉīlamalar neṭuñcōti cūḻṉta ṉīṇṭamukil vaṇṇan (8-2-3)

(f) Tokka Cōtit toṇṭai vāy (5-5-5)

(g) Ellaiyil cīr iḷañāyiṟu iraṇṭupōl tuḷaṅku tiruppātam (8-5-5).

II *Ability in denying the suitability of conventional similes*

(a) Nērā vāy cempavaḷam (2-5-5)

(b) Kaṭṭuraikkil tāmarai nin kaṇpātamkai yovvā (3-1-2)

(c) Cuṭṭuraitta nan pon untirumēni yoḷi ovvātu (3-1-2)

III *Similes not found in this world* (il poruḷ Uvamai)

(a) Peruṉtaṉ tāmaraikkaṉ peru ṉīḻmuṭi ṉāṟṟaṭaṉtōḷ Karuṉtiṉ māmukilpōl mēni aṭikaḷ (6-1-8)

(b) Malku nīlac cuṭar taḻaippac ceñcuṭarc cōtikaḷ pūttu
oru māṇikkam cērvatu pōl (7-6-6)

(c) Panneṭuñ cūḻcuṭar ñāyiṟṟōṭu pālmati ēṉti ōr kōlaṉila
Nanneṭuṅ kuṉṟam varuva toppāṉ (8-2-10)

(d) Nīḷum paṭar pūṅkaṟpakakkāvum niṟaipaṉ ñāyiṟṟin
Kōḷum uṭaiya maṇi malaipōl kiṭaṉtāṉ (8-10-8).

(e) Nīlavarai iraṇṭu piṟai kavvi ṉimirṉta toppak Kōla
varākamoṉ ṟāy ṉilam kōṭṭiṭaik koṇṭa eṉtāy (10-10-7)

(f) Pēritaḻt tāmaraikkaṇ, kanivāyatu ōr kār eḻil mēkamteṉ
kāṭkarai kōyil koḷ cīr eḻil nāl tantōḷ teyva vāri
(9-6-9).

(g) Karu ñāyiṟu utikkum karumāmāṇikka ṉāḷ ṉal malai
pōl (8-5-2).

(h) Paṭicēr makarak kuḻaikaḷum pavaḷavāyum ṉāltolum
Tuṭicēr iṭaiyum amaiṉtatu ōr tūṉir mukil (8-5-3)

(i) Māṉīr veḷḷimalai tan mēl vaṇ kār ṉīlamukil pōlat
Tūṉīrk kaṭaluḷ tuyilvāṉē (8-5-4).

(j) Ceṉtaṇ kamalakkaṇ kaṇ kaikāl civaṉtavāy ōr karuñāyiṟu
Aṉta millāk katirparappi alarṉta tokkum ammāṉē
(8-5-7).

(k) Karumāṇikka malaimēl maṇittaṭam tāmarai kāṭukaḷ
Tirumārvu vāy kaṇkai uṉti kāluṭai aṭikaḷ ceyyapirāṉ
(8-9-1)

(l) Aṇi mēruvin mitulavum, tuṉnu cūḻ cuṭar ñāyiṟum
aṉṟiyum pal cuṭarkaḷum pōl
Minnu ṉiṉmuṭi ārampalkalaṉ tānuṭai emperumāṉ
(8-9-2).

The similes cited above describe the Divine Form of God Kaṇṇan and its bewitching beauty. The cloud, the mountain, the ruby or sapphire and the sun are given as similes. Apart from His blue colour, brilliant form, captivating eyes, the crown and such other limbs, His standing

posture, and the sleeping beauty appearing with caṅku and cakra and the incarnation of Varāka have all been described with proper similes. As his Divine Form represents a strange combination of things that never combine, the Āḻvār uses various kinds of similes in appreciating His excellence.

## IV *Similes from nature*

"In Nature being the sympathetic background, it did not cease to be store house of similes and metaphors to the Tamil Poets[2]" Nammāḻvār is no exception to the aforesaid statement. In his works a judicious use of similes and metaphors in juxtaposition can be seen. The Āḻvār compares the Lord to a vast tank rich in lotus blooms. He points out the similarities between the two. The Lord's eyes, palms and soles are like the pure and red lotus blooms. His bright red lips are like the lotus buds. The Lord's beautiful sapphire - like lustrous body is like cool green leaves of the lotus. Thus the majestic mien ot Lord Kriṣṇa is compared to a broad and beautiful lotus tank. A full nature picture has been given here (8-5-1).

## V *Usual similes appearing in a reverted manner*

In the following two instances the condition of a lady in separation is compared to a drizzling night and the Lord Tirumāl has been compared to blue clouds. When the poet describes a drizzling night in the words of a lady, the weeping lady is shown as a comparison to it.

Ninṟu urukukinṟēnē pōla neṭuvānam
cenṟuruki ṉuṇtuḷiyāyc celkinṟa kaṉkulvāy (5-4-10).

In another instance a lady in separation of the Lord laments like this: "Oh clouds having a rain bow you appear with lightning. You look like Nārāyaṇa who has

parted from me after union. Please don't show your appearance before me''. Here the glittering *Koustupa* on the chest of the Lord is compared to the lighting of the clouds Kaṇṇan is compared to the clouds for his colour. So this also forms part of a simile where the usual object and the comparison stand reverted.

## VI *Explaining the doctrines of philosophy with similes from natural objects*

The Waxing and the waning of the moon is a well known fact. The bright and dark fortnights come alternately. Day and night alternate. These two are used as similes by the Āḻvār to explain his attainment of wisdom. The wisdom he obtained is neither like the changing nature of the moon nor like the alternate appearance of the sun and the darkness. The wisdom he gained is constant and of unchangeable nature. The Significance is on account of the indwelling of the Lord, the Āḻvār is not experiencing the growth and decay of the body and he has also attained a stage which is devoid of knowledge or ignorance regarding worldly objects (8-8-10).

Another significant simile used by the Āḻvār to explain the relation between the Lord who has created all the worlds and dwells hidden inside all objects and souls, is the relation that exists between the body and the soul inside it. One cannot point out where exactly the soul resides inside the body, yet without the soul, there is no bodily movement. The changes that affect the body won't affect the soul inside it. Such points are made evident from this comparison. Further it is to be remembered here that the question regarding the number of eternal objects has also been explained by the commentators with the help of this simile.

'Uṭanmicai uyirenak karan̲teṅkum paran̲tuḷan (1-1-7).

The Lord pervades all the objects including the five elements, but is not to be seen by the naked eye of man. This is explained with an apt simile. The milk contains ghee and that can be extracted from it by churning; though fresh milk posseses the ghee it is not visible to any one. On that account it cannot be said that there is no ghee in it. Likewise the Lord dwells in all objects of the world, yet He is not visible to any one.

"Kaṟan̲ta pāluḷ n̲eyyēpōl ivaṟṟuḷ eṅkum kan̲ṭukoḷ
Iṟan̲tu n̲inṟa perumāyā!" - (8-5-10).

That it is a mystery is suggested by the word, 'perumāyā' used in this context.

God is the embodiment of wisdom; omnipresent; He could not be comprehended by the five senses; He has no attachment towards the objects in the world. The defects of objects do not affect the Lord who is inside them. To explain this aspect the Āḻvār utilises another philosophic truth as a simile. The soul in a body is subjected to the pleasures and sorrows that come to the body. But youthfulness and old age etc. that affect the body do not touch the soul inside it. The idea referred to earlier has been explained by citing the second one as an example. Though the relevant passage is explained in a different way by the commentators, I feel that there is no harm to have this meaning also (5-1-10).

The relation between the Lord and the soul is explained by the Āḻvār with the following simile: The Āḻvār says 'My beautiful blue jem! to my soul there is no other support (Koḻukompu) except yourself. Is this creeper capable of standing without the support of you? Pray take me to your side and bless me with your grace" (10-10-3).

In the very same decad in another stanza the Āḻvār says to the Lord as follows: As the red hot iron sucks the water and becomes relieved of its heat, you with your limitless sweetness drank wholly my soul and captured me.

"Tīra irumpuṇṭa ṉīratupōla ennāruyirai
Ārap paruka enak kāràvamutānāyē" (10-10-5)

Here iron is compared to God. It may mean that the Lord took the Āḻvār only for His own benefit The passage may be conceived in another way too. The red hot iron took water to be relieved of its heat. Just like that the Āḻvār feels that God gave Himself to the Āḻvār to enjoy that bliss so that all his pangs of separation may vanish. According to this interpretation the Āḻvār is the beneficiary and he is comparad to iron. Eitner way the relation between the Lord and the soul and how they become united have been treated here.

The state of his suffering in the cycle of births and deaths has been compared to that of a ship that sinks in the troubled waters of a sea. To bring out the position of God, a simple simile has been used very effectively. Just as the Dēvas are greater in wealth and excellence than the ordinary men, God is greater than the Dēvas (8-1-5).

## VII. *To explain the transience of things*

'There were countless emperors who ruled over the expansive world ably for ages and also many deities such as Ayan, Aran etc. Among them who is present to-day? No one. Their number would be more than that of the sands on the seashore. If anybody thinks for a while it will be evident 'says the Āḻvār (4-1-4). If the case ot dead persons is like that what about the living? They are like the bubbles that appear in water during a heavy down

pour of rain. They appear and disappear. Who is there that stands the test of time and lives from that day to this. Certainly there is none (4-1-6). It is note worthy that the impermanent nature of the world and of wealth is brought out clearly and impressively here.

## VIII. *To explain the nature of melting*

In the last verse of 'ponnulaku' (6-8) Tiruvāymoḷi where the Āḻvār nāyaki sends emissaries on account of her pangs of separation, it is stated that those who master that decad or those who feel the pangs that the Āḻvār experiences then, would get the melting of their hearts. To explain this a simile is employed. The melting would be like the melting of the fine sand in a spring (fountain). The water causes the sand to become thin. The sand will ever be diminishing in its shape is also indicated by the simile (6-8-11).

The wax melting in the proximity of fire is employed as simile on four different occasions. Perhaps this one has impressed the Āḻvār's mind more than anything else.

(a) The unbearable anguish of the lady is described by her mother. She says that on account of her sympathetic mind her daughter is melting like the wax and taper (candle) put before fire. These objects would be charred if they fall in the fire. If they are away they would not be affected. The melting happens only when they are near fire. Likewise if the lady gives up her love to God then she can thrive or if she is with himself she can endure her feelings. But the Lord makes her experience the pangs of separation and melt - has been explained with the simile.

(b) In another place the Āḻvār contemplates on the various incarnations of the Lord, His auspicious qualities

and duties such as creation of the world etc· and that makes his heart melt : The Āḻvār says :

> "My mind is melting constantly like the wax put near the burning fire" (5-10-5).

The generality of the world spend their time in enjoying eating and dressing. But the Āḻvār differs from them. The word 'ṉiṉṟē' in the Tamil passage denotes that the heart is melting constantly. The very same simile is utilised to describe his condition in other places also (6-9-6) and (10-3-6). In the latter instance the Āḻvār mentions that his soul is burnt after melting like wax placed near the fire.

Here one may raise a question why the same simile is being used again and again. Further one finds the same natural description occuring now and then. Even some purāṇic stories are repeated often in the verses. Is it not a defect for a great poet? It seems to be a reasonable query. The answer is that it is not so, mainly with regard to the mystic poets. Throughout the world in the literature of the mystic poets, it is like this. What Sri Aurobindo says may be quoted in support of this. He writes: "In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable; it is resorted to by many poets, sometimes with insistence ....... The repetition of the same key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, sometimes key lines or half lines is a constant feature. They give an atmosphere, a significant structure, a sort of psychological frame, and architecture[3]".

## IX *Similarities in sounds*

In three places the Āḻvār compares the sound of reciting sāma vēdas, to the roaring of the waves of the sea (7-3-4). This is in the description of Tentiruppērai. While describing Tiruppuliyūr he says the former exceeds the later

(8-9-9). This idea is found in (1-8-10) also In the last phase of the Tiruvāymoḻi the beating of drums in paramapada made in order to receive the devotees has been compared to the uproar of the waves of the ocean (10-9-4).

## X *A few more notable similes of various kinds*

(1) The religious mark put on by the Hindu ladies on their forehead gives them a charm. This one is utilised in places as a simile to bring out the importance of the concerned places. The Āḻvār sings that Tirumāliruñcōlai (10-7-4), Tirukkōḷūr (6-7-6), and Tiruppuliyūr (8-9-10) are like the *Tilatams* (religious marks) - crest jewels of the southern direction. Further Vāṭṭāṟu is said to be the Tilatam for the southern country (10-6-7) and Tiruvēṅkaṭam stands as a Tilatam for the whole world (6-10-1). Thus, the significance of the two hills and the three temples or Divya dēsās are brought out.

(2) The Āḻvār in the guise of a lady describes the heroic deeds of the Lord and their effects, with the aid of a few similes. How Rama used his army to destroy the asuras, going with a glittering cakra in his hand which was admired even by his enemies, putting to death all the wicked people in the battle field has been described. His body was shining. It appeared like the hidden fire in the sea (Vaṭavāmukāgni) coming out and spreading with flames in all the directions causing destruction (8-9-3).

(3) The Lord killing the mountain - like demon king Hiraṇya in the early hours of the dusk when the sky appeared with a reddish colour (7-4-6) is compared to a lion sitting on a mountain and crushing it, so that its blood may spread on all the sides. While describing the destroyal of Ilaṅkā, the fall of the many dead bodies of the giants are said to be like the rolling of the mountain

(7-4-7). In another place the cutting of the big bodies of the asuras is compared to the cutting of the wings of the mountains by Indra with his Vajrāyuta once upon a time when they had the power of locomotion (4-8-10).

(4) In the words of the heroine the distress caused her by the cool north wind is depicted like this: It is like• the lady says, goring the bone and inserting a thread into it. The excessive pain caused by the wind is brought out by this simile (1-4-7). While sending emissaries a lady says how the sweet music of the bees affects her. She is already experiencing pain. To her this sound now appears like piercing a lance into a bleeding wound (9-5-9).

(5) That the Āḻvār has understood the nature of the worldly minded people very well is evident from the following simile. If one is rich, then his relatives crowd round him pretending to be helpers at the time of danger and co-sharers of delight or sorrow (9-1-2). They are likened to a leech which sucks blood from a person and thinks that it is doing good to him. The people who are like leeches are not at all supporters or places of refuge is emphatically stated by the Āḻvār by the use of the simile.

*Two Novel Similes:* **(The dog and the Kaḻutai (donkey or the ghost)**

On account of the longing to see the Lord the Āḻvār laments. "The Lord did not come. He who has protected the cows and the Āyārs by lifting the hill graciously, has not favoured me. Am I out of reach of the grace of the Lord?". While speaking in this strain the Āḻvār compares his state of mind to that of a dog. As a dog indicates its mind to others by wagging its tail I am also trying to express the distress in my mind (9-4-3). The dog's tail is

very short and ineffective in indicating its wish fully. Likewise my mind also suffers due to the inability of expressing its desire. It may also mean though he is unfit for the task he possesses the desire alone just as the dog. It is a rare simile which is enchanting and exercises our thought.

The mother and other relatives of the heroine arrange for a Veṟiyāṭṭu on hearing the sooth sayer's words. At that moment the companion of the heroine makes known to them that what they propose to do is futile. To praise the feet of the Lord Mayōn is the only remedy for the malady of the heroine. She requests them to pray the devotees of Lord Nārāyaṇa who are proficient in Vēdas. Further she says that their present act is like witnessing the movement of the lips of a donkey when it eats the paddy spread in the yard for drying; meaning that it is a useless job. You depend on her for your well being, but you are attempting a deed which would cause destruction to her. This kind of simile is named 'eṭuttukkāṭṭuvamai' in poetics. For this passage a slightly different interpretation can also be given. Viz. "To cure the lady of her sickness you propitiate the deity by offering ram's or goat's flesh and toddy. The offerings are eaten by a ghost: Yet you are witnessing the movement of its lips; what is the fun of it?" says the companion (4-6-7). In either meaning the simile stands as a new one and no doubt increases the excellence or beauty of the verse.

## *Metaphors*

Similes are used on the basis of similarities between two objects or acts. If the similarity is very close then to emphasise that fact the poets use metaphors. Metaphor is a condenced form of simile.[4] Taṇṭialaṅkaaram also gives

the same kind of definition[5] We shall now consider some of the metaphors employed by the Āḻvār.

A long Metaphor : In a decad where the Āḻvār speaks as a bride who describad the projection of Kaṇṇan (uru veḷippāṭu) before her mind's eye, a long drawn metaphor is used. The first seven verses describe respectively the eyes, nose, mouth, eyelids, row of teeth, ears and the forehead of the Lord that appear before her and torture her. Separate metaphors are used for each of these. And in the eighth verse it is stated that all the objects with which the Lord's limbs are compared – namely the bright lotus flower, the creeper, the coral, the bow, the row of pearls, tender leaves and the cool bright crescent moon – join together in a lustrous circle in the form of a beautiful face and torture her soul, says the bride (7-7-8). This is one of the long and complicated metaphors used by the Āḻvār.

The bride who sees the projection before her mind's eye laments as follows: "My comrades! My mothers! I suspect whether the two objects that appear before me are two beautiful eyes of the Lord Kaṇṇapirān or two Yamas who take away the lives of weaker sex only. I could not understand. They appear surrounding me like two fresh lotus flowers. What can one immersed in sorrow do?

The fine nose of Kaṇṇan – is it the tender twig of the tallest *kaṟpaka* tree or some thing else? It appears to my mind like a burning lamp and tortures me. The cloud–like blue bodied Kaṇṇan's lips that look like red fruits of Kōvai – are they pure and peerless fruits or my bad karmas: or are they beautiful shining dense coral pieces? I could not decide. They appear on all the four sides (directions) and are tantalising me.

The eye brows of Kaṉṉapirān are two blue coloured bows that are set ready to aim arrows on the lives of woman or are they the sugar cane-bows of cupid, the love God. They pounce on my life and torture me. The simile (teeth) of Kaṉṉapirān who lifted the Gōvardhana hill as an umbrella to protect the Āyas, is a silver lightning that emits lustre or are they beautiful pearls that torture my soul? I have no knowledge. Dear mothers : I could not know the way to escape from them.

The kuṇṭalam wearing ears of the Lord reclining on the serpent bed are like the shape of a makara fish or are they tender leaves? They are constantly troubling me. Oh mothers! I could not explain the effect of them fully. The Lord Kaṉṉapirān's beautiful forehead is the crescent moon with 8 phases or is it a poisonous leaf to those who love or long for it. It is killing the life of a wicked person like me.

Thus the seven separate limbs are described in a metaphorical way in the first seven verses and then in the 8th verse they have been blended together and a fine description is given. This kind of superb delineation is very rarely found elsewhere. The Āḷvār's mind perhaps is not satisfied with this. In the 9th verse he gives another pen-picture in a metaphorical way· That tells how the flagrant black hair of kaṉṉapirān is captivating the Āḷvār nāyaki. The poet could not find a single object comparable to that in this world. He expresses whether the tresses are the group of blue threads very nicely spun out of the darkness that is capable of drowning the whole world. Its dark colour is praised here. Even after adding two epithets (attributes) in the Āḷvār's mind the simile does not come equal to his expectations. The stanza declares that the beauty of the tresses and its smell caused (added) by the

Tuḷsi on it makes the lady lose her life; 'the mothers should know this' says the Āḻvār nāyaki. It is to my mind one of the fine metaphors.

Another metaphor in a single line, beautifully brings out the distress of the lady. The Āḻvār as a bride, on account of the separation of the Lord pines for a long time and describes the state of her mind as follows : Just as a flower from which the honey has been taken away by the bees (Vaṇṭu), the lady says that her femininity which is like a flower had lost its essence on account of the Lord's experience with her. 'As the Lord is the Divine Vaṇṭu, it is but natural for Him to do like this' says the lady. The comparison that the Lord is the Vaṇṭu and the lady's femininity is a flower are very striking and appropriate (9-9-4).

In another instance while the Āḻvār sings of the heroic act of Kaṇṇan killing the elephant of Kuvalayāpīṭam, a fine metaphor is found. The idea to be expressed is that the elephant was subdued and its tusks were broken. Here the flow of the must of the rusting elephant is said to be like a water fall and the elephant is like a mountain and its two tusks are like two summits. The elephant was easily conquered by Kaṇṇan.

'Vārkaṭā aruvi Yānai māmalaiyin
maruppiṇaik kuvaṭirutiu uruṭṭi' - (8-4-1)

This is celled 'Ekadēsa Uruvakam' or a partial metaphor.

In another verse the worlds are likened to a grove. The Āḻvār says the worlds which possess big deities are the grove set and nurtured by the Lord at Tiruviṇṇakaram (6-3-5). Here the worlds are compared to a grove but God who has created the worlds has not been compared to the protector or gardener of the grove. So this also

forms part of 'ēkadēsa uruvakam'. The significance of the metaphor is that the grove won't demand any one any thing for its protection. If the protector or the guard does not take care of it then it would naturally become dried. It is the duty of the person who created it to do what are all wanted for its growth – The grove has no capacity to order the rains. If it does not rain, after waiting for a considerable period it would perish at the end. If one remembers that this is the relation between the jīvas and their creator then the excellence of the metaphor will become clear.

Simple metaphors : The Āḻvār has lost his mind in the exquisite beauty of the form of the Lord. So it is found that often he is describing the limbs of the Lord by using comparable things as metaphors. Metaphors are freely used even when other objects are described. In a number of places the holy feet of the Lord are described – perhaps that captivated him more than anything else.

A few examples for the uasge:

1. un pāta paṅkayam (7-1-1)
2. un aṭippōtu (7-1-4)
3. pāta paṟpu (2-9-1)
4. un iṇait tāmaraikaḷ (6-10-6)
5. Malaraṭip pōtukaḷ (7-10-5)
6. Tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa taṭantāmaraikaḷ (6-9-9)

These speak about the feet. For other limbs a few examples are given below.

1. Tirukkaṇ tāmarai (9-2-5)
2. Kaṇ viḷikaḷin akavalai (6-2-9)
3. Ceyya vāy iruṅkani
4. Palnilā muttam (9-2-5)
5. Koppūḻc centāmarai (5-10-8)

Other ideas :

1. Kīrti Veḷḷam (6-2-8)
2. Kīrtik kani (3-8-6)
3. cuka veḷḷam (10-3-2)
4. Pērinpa veḷḷam 7-2-11)
5. Tīvinaik koṭuvan kuḻi (7-1-9)
6. Tīvāyvāḻi maḻai (6-10-4)
7. kavi amutam (8-10-5)
8. paṇ tēn (3-8-6)
9. Piṟavik kaṭal (2-8-1)
10. Ñānak kai (2-9-10)
11. Inpak kalavi amutu (4-1-5)
12. Vinai ṉōykaḷ (4-5-5)
13. Mūvulakap peruṉtūṟu (10-10-8)

Another type of metaphor : What the poet wants to express would not be mentioned in words; but an object or a thing which is comparable or similar to it in one respect or more than one, will be expressed in such a manner that it would denote the thing the author desires to say. This is named as 'Uvamai ākupeyar' by the Tamil grammarians. A few notable expressions where the Lord is described in this way are given below:

Āyar koḻuṉtē (1-7-2) also vide (1-7-4)
Māṇikkac cōti, tūya amutu (1-7-3)
Mun ṉal yāḻpayil ṉūl narampin mutir cuvai (2-3-7)
Kani, karumpinin cāṟu, kaṭṭi, tēn, amutu (3-5-6)
Kāṟēṟu (5-4-4)
Pavaḷak kunṟu (5-8-7)
Kaṟaṉta pāl neyyē etc. (8-1-7)
Teyva vāri (9-6-9) Nāvik kamala mutaṟ kiḻaṅkē (10-10-3)
Mutal Tani vittu (10-10-9), eṅkaḷ celcārvu (8-4-2)
enakku ṉallaraṇ (9-4-6)

Even here the Āḻvār employs a new device. If the objects are mentioned as they are he feels that they won't come anywhere near the objects which he wants to explain. So he adds suitable attributes to the objects to enhance their value.

Examples :

Tūya amutu (1-7-3)
Kaṭal paṭā amutu (2-3-5)
Tītavam keṭukkum amutam (2-7-3)
Kōtavamil en kannaṟ kaṭṭi (2-7-3)
Ennai ākkikkoṇṭu enakkē tannaittaṉta kaṟpakam (2-7-11)
ārā vamute (5-8-1), Vāṭṭamil en karumāṇikkam (9-5-7) etc.

*Other figures of speech:* The heroine dares (ventures) to resort to maṭal in order to get herself united with the Lord. At that time the night sets in; so she could not proceed and her agony increases. Though she decides to put an end to her life, she understands that even that is not open to her. She feels that the sun has not appeared on account of dread to see her condition of suffering. Here she attributes an imaginary cause for the delay in the raising of the sun.

Further she feels that the sun who has to obey the orders of the Lord has the sympathetic heart, so he did not appear before her. But the all powerful gracious Lord has not yet come. Her feeling is that the protector of all and the purusōtama can withstand any suffering. Is it possible for an ordinary person like the sun? So she in a sarcastic manner exclaims 'im maṇṇaḷaṉta kaṉperiya ṉam kārēṟu vārānāl' meaning 'the benevolent chief who has measured this earth on account of His generosity, has not appeared'.

Though the words mean praise, here they should be taken as used in a sacrcastic manner. For the natural action of the sun a reason is stated by the poet. It is called 'Taṟkuṟippēṟṟam' in poetics.

### *The conventional similes used while describing Goddess and the other ladies*

A few Examples :

| | |
|---|---|
| Vēli nēr taṭaṅkaṇ (6-2-4) | Vēy maru tōḷ (10-3-1) |
| Mānēy nōkki (1-5-5) | Minniṭai maṭavār (6-2-1) |
| Keṇṭai oṇkaṇ (10-4-3) | Koṭi ēr iṭai (9-8-2) |
| Cēlēy kaṇ (6-10-8) (5-1-8) | Kōvai vāy (4-3-1) |
| Vāṭivēl taṭaṅkaṇ (9-8-4) | Maḻaru tēn moḻi (6-2-5) |
| Vaḷēy taṭaṅkaṇ (9-8-4) | Amuta men moḻi (6-5-2) |
| Taḷavēḻ muṟuval pinnai (1-5-1) | Kompu pōl citai (4-2-8) etc. |
| Kāmpaṇai tōḷ (2-5-7) | |

Even here one can notice a few novelties in the use of the Āḻvār. 'Kompu arāvu ṉuṇṇiṭai' (1-10-3) - The goddess having a waist comparable to a flower branch of a tree and a snake. The use of the cobra or a snake as a simile in such a situation is a rare one. One can also interpret the phrase as the flower branch which has been made thin;

Secondly, the Lord is compared to water (1-8-11). The similarity is not with the colour but with the quality of the water. Water takes a route prepared by the people. Likewise Lord Kaṇṇan also follows the path of the people, has been indicated by the simile, or rather it can mean as the water always finds its level, the Lord also is generous towards the low.

Thirdly, the eyes of the Lord are described as 'Tāmarai-ttaṭaṅkaṇ' where as the eyes of Goddess are described as 'Kuvaḷai oṇ malarkkaṇkaḷ'. The distinction shown is noteworthy.

Finally above all these there is one variety of simile which has been pointed out by Tolkāppiyar. That occurs mainly in the love lyrics of the Cankam classics. It is called 'Uḷḷuṟai' by Tolkāppiyar. Further there is 'iṟaicci' which is another type which gives suggestive meaning and called by the name of dvani by Sanskrit grammarians. "What is called uḷḷuṟai or iṟaicci in love lyrics is named as *kuṟippu* or suggestion in puṟapporuḷ or objective poetry."[6] The following remark by Dr. Varadarajan regarding this item is worth remembering. "Dvani is referred to as iṟaicci by Tolkāppiyar. 'Iṟaicci tānē poruṭ puṟattatuvē.'[7] In the medieval period persons who worked for the development of Tamil grammars would have done a memorable work if they have explained this aspect."[8]

*Kuṟippu*

We shall now consider briefly the various patterns of suggestive meanings found in Tiruvāymoḻi: Besides figures of speech, the suggestive meaning conveyed by the words adds beauty to poetry. Words are so couched that they suggest some meaning other than that which is conveyed superficially. On certain occasions it may be that lovers may not be in a position to convey to each other directly what they intend; then they may have to communicate indirectly or suggest certain ideas. In Tiruvāymoḻi there are many instances where the verses lend themselves to such treatment. They are highly suggestive of varied meanings. Apart from the love lyrics the other verses too are susceptible of such treatment. These add to poetic excellence. A few illustrations are given below.

1) The first variety is, that are in the lines that speak about the Lord or that are descriptive of places or which speak about the Āḻvār and his relation with God. *Example* :

The Āḻvār while he speaks of God has used words that are suggestive of meanings. He says that God is proximate to him. A phrase used than to denote God shall be considercd here. God is referred as 'Vēḻamaruppocittān' (1-9-2) meaning that it is He that controlled the elephant by breaking its tusks. It suggests that God has made Āḻvār to control his five senses which are like elephants and prevent them from their way - ward behaviour. (Vide 2-6-9 also).

'Cēṟār cunait tāmarai ceṉtīmalarum Tiruvēṅkaṭattānē
ārā anpil aṭiyēn unnaṭicēr vaṇṇa maruḷāyē' (6-10-2).

Here the nature of the mountain - Tiruvēṅkaṭam - is described. The springs on the mountain overflow and cause mire. The lotuses that have blossomed there look like a flame. The Āḻvār prays to the Lord on the mountain that He should bestow His grace on him. Here the description of the spring is suggestive of an idea. The spring possess lotuses means that it never runs dry. So also his love to God is always there. The idea that is sought to be conveyed is that the love is permanent and not fleeting.

In another place, where the people of the world are advised to worship the Lord, they are asked to use flowers that are ever fresh and from which honey has not been separated: Tēnai vāṭā malariṭṭu nīr ṟaiñcumin (9-10-4). This means that the flowers which have honey, and which fade not are to be used in worship, That the devotee does not suffer any separation from His Lord is also suggested even as flowers do not suffer separation from honey (vide 9-2-9) and 10-3-11 also).

In description of places, very often the sight of animals with their young ones is found mentioned. Certain animals live in groups and move as a herd. For instance

elephants are impelled by the herd instinct. Peacocks live in pairs. Maṟiyoṭu piṇaicēr māliruñcōlai (2-10-6) maḷakaḷiṟ-ṟinamcēr māliruñcōlai (2-10-9) mātuṟu mayil cēr māliruñcōlai (2-10-10). The suggested meaning is that inspired by these sights the devotee desires to be in the company of the Lord. Could we not consider this explanation as also a probable one?

2) The second variety is the phrases employed to address the Lord and the companions of the heroine which are suggestive.

Examples :

The heroine is separated from the Lord. She finds the separation intolerable. She thinks of the Lord and laments : "you have had the prowess to cut asunder the thousand shoulders of Vāṇan. My daughter longs to see you. You seem to be unsympathetic": Viṟal, Vāṇan āyiramtoḷ tuṇittie! Ummaik Kāṇaṉir irakkamilīrē (2-4-2). These are the words of the mother of the heroine. In the past Usha wanted to attain Aniruddha and for their sake Lord Kaṇṇan cut away the many shoulders of Vāṇan, the father of Ushā. Such was his sympathy and fighting skill. "But today, could you not help this forlorn soul". This is the meaning hinted at in this line. vide, (2-4-10) (7-2-1) etc.

In an address to the companions we find the phrase 'Vāṇutalīr' – 'those that are endowed with bright forehead' used by the mother of the heroine. She says 'My daughter desired the cool and pleasing Tulsi of the Lord and disap-pointed lies in the bed coiled. The daughter lies coiled but the companions of her daughter are addressed as being endowed with a bright, glowing forehead. Here the deep anguish of the mother is brought out. She looks forward for the day when her daughter's forehead would also shine

forth as those of her comrades. Vaṭamkaḷ pūṉtaṉṉaṉ tuḷāy malarkkē ivaḷ Maṭaṅkumāl Vāṉutalir! enmaṭakkompē (4-2-7) vide, (4-4-1), (5-3-7) and (5-9-3-6, 8). In verses where the birds are sent as messengers we shall find suggestions of the above sort – (6-1-3, 9).

3) The third type is the phrases which cannote exactly the opposite meaning. They are so worded.

The Āḻvār attains the state of a lady and looks upon the inanimate objects and birds as also suffering due to separation from the Lord. He thinks they suffer from the pangs of separation of the Lord as he suffers.

Oh moon! You do not dispel the darkness from the sky and lose your lustre and wane. Is it that you have heard the '*true*' words of the Lord who reclines on the serpent with a disc in his hand, and suffered bodily change "Aivāy aravaṇaimēl āḻipperumāṉār meyvācakam kēṭṭu unmeyṉnīrmāi tōṟṟāyē?" (2-1-6). The Lord is addressed as 'perumāṉār'. The suffix 'ār' is added usually to denote greatness. But here it does not show that meaning. Further though the word 'Mey' which means truth has been used here, it means only falsehood. Probably to avoid the notion of ordinary falsehood 'Mey' or 'truth' is used; or to designate that it is a great lie. This suggestion is strengthened by the usage of 'Pollāt tirukkuṟaḷā' (2-6-1) which means the beautiful and gracious Vāmanā – who is short in stature.

4) The 4th variety is where certain ideas are expressed.

Example:

a) En ṉīla mukil vaṇṇaṟku

Ṉan nīla makanṟilkāḷ. ṉalkutirō? ṉalkirā' (1-4-4). Makanṟil birds are sent as messengers. These birds of

blue colour are addressed: "What message shall I send to my Lord who is of the hue as the blue clouds. Would you care to convey or not my message to the Lord? Why should the ḷady utter these uncertain words? These birds chosen as messengers are blue – The Lord is also blue in complexion. It is highly probable that these birds which are similar to the Lord in complexion also share His characteristics and are like the Lord in action.

b) In another passage the Āḻvār when advising the people says that the Lord chooses to reside at Tirukkaṇṇapuram. This temple has high walls for its fortification. The suggested meaning is that even as the high compound walls serve to protect the Lord, He serves as the fortress for the devotees.

'Vānai uṉtum matiḷ cūḻ Tirukkaṇṇapuram
Tānayaṉta perumān caraṇākumē' (9–10–4).

c) 'Celvam malki avankiṭaṉta Tirukkōḷūrkkē
olki olki naṭaṉtu eṅkane pukuṅkol ociṉtē?' (6–7–7)

This is the lamentation of the mother of the lady who wended her steps towards her Lord. 'He is rich and resides at Tirukkōḷūr. I do not know how my young daughter would reach the place' says the mother. Her expectation is that He should have come at least half way to greet her daughter. Why has He not come to greet her? It is perhaps due to the pride of wealth that he is endowed with.

d) Tiruppērai is a place full of gardens with ripe fruits. The heroine asks her mother to take her to Tiruppērai in time. It is her thought that everything would be fit for consumption there. Those who would take her over there seem to procrastinate. If only they take her, it is certain that he would accept her. There would be no impediment in her being accepted. Further the Lord aimed at the viḷa tree

with the calf that was by its side and this met with the destruction of both. In this place there are no asuras who have incurred the divine wrath and stand as trees. There is no need to fear is the suggested meaning:

Kaniṉta viḷavukkuk kaṉṟeṟiṉta kaṇṇapirāṉukku
enpeṇmai tōṟṟēṉ
Muniṉtu iniyenceytīr? annaimīrkāḷ! munniavan
vaṉtu vīṟṟiruṉta
Kaniṉta poḻil tirupperai yiṟkē kālampeṟa ennaik
kāṭṭumine (7-3-5)

There are other passages where such suggestive meanings could be gleaned[9].

e) The Āḻvār with disgust for the things of the world prays to the Lord to take him away and afford refuge. On such an occasion there is a description of the world.

Koṇṭāṭṭum kulampunaivum tamaruṟṟār viḻuṉitiyum
Vaṇṭār pūṅkuḻalāḷum manaiyoḻiya Uyirmāytal
Kaṇṭāṟṟēṉ ulakiyaṟkai kaṭal vaṇṇā! aṭiyenai
Paṇṭēpāl karutātu unnaṭikkē kūyppaṇikaḷḷē (4-9-3)

There is immense wealth. The consort adorns her hair with flowers which are full of honey; there is a spacious mansion. If with all these comforts a person were to die, what is the nature of the world. The individual though endowed with the best of riches, a wife and a huge house with comforts, does not enjoy any of these. His condition is lamentable. The 'Vaṇṭār kuḻalāḷ' suggests that it is only the bees that have enjoyed the honey in the flowers; but not the man.

5) Fifthly the descriptions that are attempted through Karupporuḷ have adopted either of the forms - *Uḷḷuṟai* or *Iṟaicci*.

The bride is keen on reaching 'Tiruvalla vāḷ', a place of sanctity. Her companions dissuade her. While addressing them 'Tiruvallavāḷ' is described as follows.

Enṟukol? tōḻimīrkāḷ! emmainīr naliṉtu enceytīrō?
Pontikaḷ punnaimakiḷ putumātavi mītaṉavi
Tenṟal maṉaṅkamaḻum Tiruvallavāḻ nakaruḷ
Ninṟapirāṉ aṭinīṟu aṭiyōn koṇṭu cūṭuvate. (5-9-2)

There are *Punnai* trees which are golden in appearance. So are the *Makiḻa* trees. Kurukkatti has blossomed. The southern wind which flows through these trees carries with it the smell of the flowers. 'When is it that I adorn my self with the holy ashes of the Lord residing at such a place; comrades what do you gain by preventing me from proceeding to Tiruvallavāḻ'? asks the lady. The suggested meaning is that the trees in the sacred place are enough to cause her emaciation; why should the companions who are weak in body and mind torment and cause agony to her is the intention of the lady. She describes the nature of the Lord in terms of the southern wind. This wind takes away the sweet smell of the flowers in the region through which it passes and does not give anything in return. By this the lady (poet) suggests it is the characteristic of the things of the place. The hero imbibes this characteristic and does not give anything in return. This is a fitting illustration of what Tolkāppiyar says of *Iṟaicci*. vide (6-1-8) (7-3-1) (7-3-6).

It is for the sake of convenience of study that the passages having suggestive or implied meaning have been classified under five heads. It is not suggested that they are five distinct kinds. Appreciation of the skill (art) of the poet in conveying much through suggestion rather than explicit enunciation is the most important aspect. In this the poetry of Nammāḻvār is unexcelled.

CHAPTER VI

# TREATMENT OF NATURE

There is no poet who does not feel joy in the company of nature. So one can find all poets throughout the ages describing her in one way or other. Their feelings may differ. It is said that "Wordsworth considered Nature as something divine and he sought communion through Nature with Nature's indwelling Soul. For Shelly, Nature was a mystical revelation of that eternal spirit in whom all modes of life are one. Byron found in Nature the passionate freedom which the conditions of the human lot denied to man. To Arnold, Nature's calm was a refuge and a solace to the fretful and troubled heart."[1] Nammāḻvār's mind was always on God and his yearning for God was so intense that he saw God in everything. He says that "God is the bread of our souls, the water of our life and the light and joy of our existence."[2] So there is no wonder in the Āḻvār describing Nature as sympathetic towards him and associating it with his ideas and activities. He uses metaphors and similes taken from nature to a large extent. Just like the Caṅkam poets he is also describing Nature not for the sake of describing it, but only as a background to human life. One finds a faithful descripation and to some extent a conventional treatment of natural focts in his poetry.

In Tiruvāymoḻi we find description of Nature in four different aspects : 1. while describing divya dēsas, their natural scenery is described, 2. when various birds and other natural beings were sent as messengers the descr iption

comes in and 3. while describing the beauty of the Lord in His existence in various natural objects 4, Apart from these three, the most important aspect is the one where the poet depicts Nature to be in tune with the activities of mankind.

## 1. *Nature in place Descriptions*

Though Āḻvār mentions about 31 sacred places in Tiruvāymoḻi, eighteen places come under the category which get a detailed description. Those places belong to hilly regions, agricultural tracts and maritime regions.

*The two Hills – Southern and Northern*: While describing "Mālirumcōlai hill"[3] and "Tiruvēṅkaṭa hill"[4] he mentions about the water falls and the precious stones they bring forth and the beauty of the pools where water lilies grew and lotuses blossomed and the thick forest adjoining the hills and the natural beasts and birds such as deer, elephant and peacock, living with their families and the height of the hills and above all the visit of the Dēvās and other human beings in plenty to those places, on account of the dwelling of the Lord there. These are nicely described. The buzzing sound of the bees seems to him to be the singing of 'Tennā Tenā' by them. The hills are fertile. Tiruvēṅkaṭam is said to be a Tilatam – religious mark on the forehead – for the whole world. He enjoins people to visit Mālirumcōlai while they are still in youthful age and in vigour. While he Wants to do all kinds of selfless service to God at Tiruvēṅkaṭam and begs for it, it seems that he also enjoys the scenery there. Otherwise why should he describe the rattling sound of the overflowing water in the water falls there? The Lord at Vēṅkaṭam standing in the posture of showing his one hand towards his feet, seems to imply that God invites all to come to

his feet, that is why he sings 'Aṭikkīl amarntu pukuntu aṭiyīr vālmin' (6-10-11).

*Places on the river banks*: The other places, Kurukūr, Srīvaramaṅkalam, Kuṭantai, Tiruviṇṇakar etc. are situated among the paddy fields. While describing these places he talks about the fertility of the paddy and sugarcane crops and the blossomed lotuses there and big rows of buildings and mansions. He is very particular in saying that these places are haunted and praised by Dēvās and others and the places are noted for their beauty. And lastly he seems to be very fond of describing the tossing of the plants in the paddy field on account of the wind, as fanning the Lord.[5]

*Temples in the West coast region*: The Āḻvār sings about many Divya dasas situated in the present Kēraḷā State. Many of them are in the hilly region. They are Tiruvallavāḻ, Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruvāṟanviḷai, Tirucceṅkunṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟu etc. While describing Tiruppuliyūr we find the Āḻvār giving elaborate and vivid accounts regarding the place and its surrounding scenery. The places around it namely, Tiruvallavāḻ, Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, Tirucceṅkunṟūr Tirucciṟṟāṟū and Thiruvanantapuram also have been described in the same way. The hilly and the coastal regions and also the agricultural tract mingle with one another in these places. So one finds the three varieties of description going together. When we read the description, the present landscape of Kēraḷā comes before our mind. Is it not a good evidence to prove the true nature of the Āḻvār's Nature description?.

(a) *Hilly Region*: The beautiful. fertile and tender leaves of betel creepers are twisting round the bulky and soft trunk of the arecanut trees. The plantain trees with broad leaves and petals stand by these side with ripe fruits.

Nearby, there are cocoanut trees who leaves twist with one another because of their proximity. In between these the sweet smelling south wind blows freely. There stands the cool Tiruppuliyūr (8-9-7).

Here we find the natural vegetation of the area. Trees like arecanut, plantain and cocoanut and the creepers of betel leaves are mentioned with proper epithets, such as *Mellilaic celvavaṇkoṭi*, *Viṅkiḷantāḷ kamuku*, *Mellīlai maṭal vālai*, *Pullilait teṅku*. We find the Āḻvār portraying not only the form which appears to the eye but also the taste, smell and touch, except the aspect of sound among the five senses.

In another description the pools in the mountains are said to be blossomed with big and large lotus flowers (8-9-5) so that one flower may cover or encircle the whole area. It implies that the place won't give room to others. That means the lady refered to in this poem cannot go anywhere else outside. She has to depend only on this Lord at Tiruppuliyūr. The fruits on the arecanut are grown there on account of tho grace of the Lord. They seem to be like the red lips of the lady (8-9-6).

Another description with regard to Tiruvallavāḻ runs like this: Tiruvallavāḻ is a place where the green leaves at the tall arecanut, jack tree, coconut and plantain trees are closely touching the roofs of the big and beautiful buildings with many storeys (5-9-4).

(b) *Agricultural tract* : While speaking about the same Tiruppuliyūr, the Āḻvār describes the groves that surround the place. They are as an evidence of fhe fertility of the place. The sugarcane and the large size paddy crops are found all over the locality. The cool and the fertile fields are revealing the fertility attained on account of the ploughs there (8-9-4).

The fields in the same place are protrayed in the following manner. In the tanks in which crocodiles live, a flock of lotus flowers have bloomed. They look like the flames of the burning lamps. The Tiruppuliyūr is surrounded by such fields (8-9-9).

While describing Tiruvallalvāḷ we find him mentioning the utility of the objects found there. The sweet sugarcane which is to be crushed for its juice and the paddy crops with their ripe grains are found everywhere. Besides them are seen the flower tanks in the cool Tiruvallavāḷ (5-9-8). Here we find the minute observation of the Āḷvār. The Nature, apart from his other senses feasts his ears also. "The young bees are singing, after drinking the sweet honey available from the cool groves. It is like the tune of the flute and yāḷ (5-9-9). Here we find this portrayal dealing with more than one of the five senses. It gives a special pleasure if we remember that the learned scholar Tiruvaḷḷuvar's comparison of the music of flute and Yāḷ to the unarticulated sweet words of one's own children[6]. As the Āḷvār has no family of children he happens to experience and explain the sweet music comparing it to the humming sound made by the bees.

If he speaks about the sense of sound here, in another verse, we find him, while describing the beauty of the tanks in that place, resorting to the sense of seeing or perception. He also associates it with human beings. "The tanks full of water, possess on their surface lotuses and red lilies, which appear like the bright faces and eyes of ladies (5-9-7)." Apart from these descriptions we find the following trees and birds of Nature mentioned in his poems. *Pontikaḷ punnai, makiḷ, putumātavi' Cerunti, ñāḷal, maḷalai vāy vanṭu, Cēṟṟil Vāḷai Kuruṉṭu, Kayal, naḷḷi, Cēl* etc.

## 2. *Nature description in the sending of natural objects as messengers and in the the Act of Addressing them*

*The messengers*: The Āḻvār nāyaki in her state of despondency on account of her Lord's separation attempts to send some birds around her as messengers to her Lord. Usually this kind of love aspect will be described in the background of the coastal region. Here also we find the very same background. She sees a crane by her side and addresses it. In the Vaiṣṇava philosophy one who wants to attain Lord should approach through the Lord's spouse. So the Āḻvār nāyaki also here first addresses the female crane though she wants to engage the male bird on her errand. The phrase used to denote the bird is "añciṟaiya maṭanāṟāy" (1-4-1). O! Young crane with beautiful feathers: The word 'maṭa' denotes not only the usefulness of the bird but also the submissive nature of the bird or its present condition of revealing that it enjoyed pleasure with its mate only just then and it is evident from its appearance. Further the word may be taken as to denote one of the four qualities specifically prescribed for ladies. Again she describes the feather of the bird because that is the means by which the bird is to carry out her request. This is the inner meaning referred to by that word.

One who is in distress will usually cry 'Ammē'. O! Mother! Just like that here also the pining lady in her languish cries O! crane: In all the coming addresses (apostrophes) also the same kind of meaning can be given. We find about eleven birds and three other objects employed in all the four sub-divisions which deal with sending errands or messengers. The birds are crane, cukkoo, swan, bee, parrot, makanṟil and Kuruku, Kokku, Tumpi, Tiny Pūvai and Putā. The other objects are the clouds, dolls and

the heart. In the descriptions, we find the quality of the birds or their appearance is denoted, such as O! the good blue makanṟils (1-4-4). O! Young parrot (1-4-7) bright looking parrot (6-1-7) or O! parrots brought up by me (6-8-5) etc. O! bees with pure words (9-7-6), My bees on the mullai (6-8-4). O! The good beautiful birds (6-8-1). O! The white crane with spotless feathers (6-8-8), O! Young swans dancing in pairs after enjoying the uninterrupted sexual pleasure (6-1-4), Swans dwelling on the lotuses (6-1-9). O! The beautiful cukkoos perching on the branches of the Punnai trees (6-1-6). O! Young crane with reddish feet, happily resting here after searching your food in the groves in the coastal region and the backwaters (9-7-1). While describing the cloud it is said that the bright clouds run fastly in the clear sky and produce fire by their lightning (9-7-5), O! The beautiful clouds of the fertile town called Tirumūḻikkaḷm (9-7-4).

*Identifying with Nature*: Apart from the four sub-divisions in which messengers are sent, we find in one sub-division (2-1) where the Āḻvār's state of mind exceeds the ordinary limit and so he lements on account of despair. He did not find any one even to send as a messenger. Whatever object he sees, it appears to him as if it is also suffering like him due to separation. He finds that Nature is in tune with him. The crane appears in pale colour. The anṟil bird seems to cry, if it opens its sharp pointed beak. The unceasing roar of the sea during night and day seems to be like lamenting with a loud voice soaked with grief. The cool north wind that blows in all places and in all times seems to be wandering in all places. He thinks that it is suffering on account of a disease that would end only with its life. The cloud that brings water sufficient for the whole world seems to melt like water. The crescent moon that appears diminished in its brightness seems to be emaciated and have lost its original beauty and freshness.

The darkness intervenes and prevents these objects from seeing one another. The blackish back waters (without calmness) are agitated and rolling hither and thither throughout the night. The burning oil lamp in the bed room seems to be suffering from high fever as if it cannot be touched with hand. The qualities mentioned above are the natural ones and also the permanent features of the various objects and beings. Without understanding this, rather forgetting it on account of her grief, the Āḻvār nāyaki considers that they are also experiencing sorrow on account of the separation of the Lord. So she laments along with them, so that grief may find an outlet and decrease in intensity. This is very beautifully brought out in the ten verses in the particular sub-division. A continuity is also shown among the verses.

Usually the pining will be described in the background of coastal region. Here the lady is depicted as living in the 'Kānal' - grove at the sea coast. There comes a crane in search of its food and is seen by the lady. She asks the the crane whether it is also caught in the same circumstances and has lost its heart, because it is suffering and has got paleness on its body. At that time she heard the cry of an Anṟil from the Palmyra tree nearby. As the sound denoted its suffering she asks the Anṟil bird whether it is also in the same plight of mind like her on account of desiring the Tulsi garland at the feet of Lord, who reposes on the bed of serpent.

At that moment she notices the big sea which is the largest phenomenon in the world, losing its pride, and through its waves coming towards the shore and retreating back and making a loud noice. It appears to her that the sea is lamenting even beyond to express its grief in words. So she asks it whether it experiences such a kind of grief as her on account of its desire to get at the feet of Rama

and its non-fulfilment. Then there she sees an object still bigger which pervades everywhere and also blows with chillness, which is the wind. She thinks that it wanders because of the grief of its separation and it has also got the cold fever. So asks it whether it is also in the same plight as she is.

By that time a cloud is seen there from which the drops of rain begin to fall. She thinks that the cloud which possesses a form beneficial to the world has also lost itself in the courageous qualities of the Lord and on account of its love towards Him suffers like this. The benefit it has received is this suffering only.

Near the cloud there appears a crescent Moon. She asks it whether it has lost its brightness and beauty on account of the cheating of the Lord who with a disc in his hand reposes on the five tongued serpent. The mention of five tongued serpent as bed, Disc in the hand and the honorific suffix added to the Tamil word denoting the Lord all are used with contempt.

*Pun on words* : As the moon disappeared, the darkness covers the area. The Tamil sentens used in the commentary is "Matikeṭṭavāṟē aṉtakāram mēliṭṭatu[7]". The commentator puns on the words. The sentence also means that as soon as the knowledge goes ignorance overpowers (spreads).

The action of the darkness is explained in two different ways. In one sense one may say that the Āḻvār nāyaki without understanding that to be dim and be huddled itself in one place is its nature, thinks that it is so on account of its separation from its lover and it is suffering even without the ability to express its grief and so feels for it. "We are at least lamenting on account of our grief but your

condition seems to be still worse. That makes us feel more sorrow than before. Hail to you. Let you live long relieved off your distress" (2-1-7). Another meaning is that the darkness has entered into the group of beings who were pining due to the separation of their lord and prevented them from seeing one another and by that act has intensified their grief. The Āḻvār asks "Is it proper for you to trouble us by preventing us from the outlet of redressing our grief by expressing to one another?" These two meanings are given on account of the words in the verse. 'Nīnaṭuvē vēṟṟōr vakaiyiṟ koṭitāy' meaning - "You come in between and are very harsh towards us in a different way".

She has been overpowered by the darkness and so goes here and there and reaches a backwater which gives the appearance of an intensified darkness. It is not calm. The water is running to and fro. She feels that the backwater is also in love with the Lord. "Have you lost your heart in the captivating action of the the child Kriṣṇa like me and so suffer on the expectation of his grace?" (2-1-8). Perhaps at this stage the Lord comes and embraces the Āḻvār so that all his unbearable distress may vanish. This is evident from his request 'hereafter don't leave me in such a position'' (2-1-10). Because of this kind of love towards God, the Āḻvār also got the name Ārāta Kātaṟ Kurukūrc Śaṭa Kōpan (2-1-11) meaning 'Kurukūrc Śaṭakōpan of the unremitting love'. Thus we find all the senses of the Āḻvār finding in all the elements of Nature only their interest towards God. Animate or inanimate - all are associated with God - that is what the Āḻvār feels.

### 3. *Nature in the description of God*

Description of God is one of the main themes in Tiruvāymoḻi. While doing so in many places we find Nature

also being utilised. In the first decad itself (1–1–7) it is mentioned God who has destroyed all the worlds at the end, evolving Himself into the five elements namely the strong sky, fire, wind, water and earth and through them into all objects that are extensively spread in this world. Apart from bringing forth these things, he is in and out of each of those objects, as the soul is to the body. The spotless vēdas are the pramāṇa (authority) for this. The epithet used for sky can be interpreted in two or more ways. The element that first appeared from God is sky. To indicate that the attribute 'tiṭa' has been used. Or it can be taken as indicating vividly that the elements are five including the sky and not four as some consider to be. This verse speaks one of the very basic ideas represented by the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy.

Next it is said that God is spread in each of the atoms of the water in the large cool sea. He is spread there as if the small atom is a big universe. Not only that He is also spread fully in the other elements such as earth and sky etc. In all the very small (tiny) objects and the souls that reside in them He dwells, even without their knowing His existence (without their knowledge) (1–1–10). God is also represented as the special qualities of sound of the strong sky, destroying nature of the fire, strength of the air, protecting nature of water and the tolerant nature of earth (1–1–11)

The Āḻvār in another place states that the whole of the beautiful wealth we see, is the wealth of the Supreme Being and one has to understand that he is a part and parcel of it (1–2–7). These ideas are expressed when the philosophy is explained. Later on the Āḻvār depicts God as the tender leaf of the Āyās, as a mysterious benevolent being who would submit himself for the beating of the Āyās and also as his bright sapphire and as an unalloyed

nectar (1-7-3). When giving his experience with God the Āḻvār says that it is like the mixture of honey, good milk, ghee, sugarcane juice and nectar (2-3-1). Only natural objects are employed while describing it in many a place.

*God as the soul of Nature* : The Āḻvār feels that God is in all the objects and in the world, as their soul. He contemplates on that idea and attempts to do service to God by his words, i.e. by eulogizing him in his verses. He finds no difference in His nature, qualities, wealth and actions. All of them seem to him to be the objects to be attained. He enjoys them not separately but all of them mingled in Him. Here one finds a place for Nature in the verses. As pointed out earlier, the five elements forming as dwelling places of God is mentioned here. The Āḻvār exclaims that he does not know in what words he should describe Him – whether as the glorious earth which has no equal or whether as the shining cool sea or whether as fire or wind or the sky which gives place to all the others. "Shall I describe Him as the two bright lights (the sun and the moon) of the world or as all the objects which cannot be despised (neglected) because they are His wealth" are his exclamations (3-4-1).

In the next verse the following objects are mentioned as God's abodes. All the mountains, the clouds which attract all by their beauty and coolness, the twinkling stars, the arts and the faultless sound etc. In the third verse the Āḻvār laments that by what name he should describe or call Him. *paṅkayakkaṇṇan, pavaḷac cevvāyan, aṅkatiraṭiyan, añcana vaṇṇan, ceṅkatirmuṭiyan* etc. Lotus eyed person, a man with coral like red mouth, one who has beautiful and shining feet, and one whose colour is blue and one with a glittering red crown and so on.

In the fourth verse all the precious natural stones and others are depicted to be the dwelling places of the

Lord. They are *Cātimāṇikkam*, *Cavikoḷ ponmuttam*, *Cāti ṉalvayiram*, *Tavivil cir viḷakkam* and *āti añ cōti*. The sapphire of a good quality (a noble sapphire), a shining gold and pearl of a good nature, superior quality Diamond, a beautiful lamp that will give light for ever and the first created unchanging world of paramapada which shines brighter than all the other lights.

Fifth verse suggests some of the tasteful things as his abodes namely, *Vinai tīrkkum naccu mā maruṉtu*, *Nalañ Kaṭal amutam*, *accuvaikkaṭṭi*, *aṟucuvai aṭicil*, *neyccuvaittēṟal*, *Kani* and *pāl*. The lovable medicine that cures the ills of the devotees, the nectar got without churning the sea, the sweet sugarcane tasting like nectar, the fine meal of six tastes, the honey of superior taste, good ripe fruit and milk. In the succeeding verses the other abodes such as the Vēdas constituted of sounds and other groups of Sāstras, the various celestial worlds, the other superior dēvas who find a place next to God are mentioned respectively.

*Relationship between God and Nature*: Though there is not much of description in the above quoted passages, still they have been pointed out here to emphasise the fact that the Āḻvār sees God in all the various kinds of natural objects which are majestic by themselves. One may feel that the hills are mentioned because Lord Nārāyaṇa's appearance is like them. The clouds are stated because they resemble the Lord in colour. The sweet objects are referred to because the experience of God is as sweet as they are. In the opinion of the writer this is not appro priate because one cannot give such explanation, with regard to the other references. So the meaning given earlier is the proper one. The many artificial things of the world have not been taken into account. Only fundamental things and the natural objects of the world around him

have been mentioned that too with proper and apt epithets, wherever possible.

*Apt epithets*: That the apt epithets used by the Āḻvār give to his ideas a poetic value will be quite evident if one simply looks into the following two lines: "Tiriyum kāṟṟōṭu akal vicumpu tiṉiṉtamaṉ kiṭaṉta kaṭal eriyum tīyōṭu iru cuṭart teyvam maṟṟum maṟṟum muṟṟumāy" (3-6-5). The same idea expressed earlier by the writer is stated here. The epithets used by the Āḻvār should by remembered – the wind that wanders always, the extensive sky from which all the other elements were separated, the earth which is of stiff sand, the sea which lies with in its boundaries and the fire which emits its flames always upwards. Then the two bright objects viz. sun and moon are mentioned without any other attributes. They need no definition. And the other word which has been repeated twice denotes human beings and the other animals, birds and flora and fauna.

*Power of observation and description*: The power of observation of nature and its minute description can be seen in the following example where the poet describes Kaṇṇan's act of lifting the Gōvartan hill to protect the cows and their owners from the torrential rain poured by the clouds of Indra. "The grazing cows with the grass in their mouth came under the hill. The beasts on the hills tumbled down. The water filled to the brim in the pools of the mountain began to come down (pour down) with great noise" (7-4-10). Kaṇṇan wanted to prevent one rain but actually he became the cause for many rains. It is an irony, perhaps. All the flock of cows and the people of the Āyarpāṭi adjusted themselves under this hill, when our ord – the potector lifted the hill to save the people and the cows from the wicked rains. The picturesque descrip-

tion is very vivid and natural. The use of the words such as *Puka, puraḷa, piḷiriccoriya, oṭunka* and the imaginative talent employed here no doubt makes the poem very interesting.

4. *Nature as a responsive Agent*

It is said that the ability to see and describe any natural phenomenon without reference to personal feeling, is very rare in recent literature[8]. The Āḻvār had occasion to describe the evening time while he did not get the opportunity of seeing the Lord. That separation made him lament like the gōpis separated from Lord Kṛṣṇa. He experiences singly the grief of all the ladies put togethee and speaks as follows.

Grazing the cattle is as important for the cowherds – shepherds – as Sandhiyāvandhan for Brahmins. It is their special duty or Dharma pertaining to their caste. Kṛṣṇan would go out after the cows to graze them during the day time. If he does not turn up in time in the evening the (gōpis) or the ladies of the Āyar cēri would experience grief. The Āvār assuming himself to be a lady of the pastoral region laments in separation from Lord Kṛṣṇa as follows: (9-9).

"The slow moving south wind that brings the fragrance of the jasmine with it, is cutting my body like a saw. The fragrance which can be felt by the nose is destroying not only the very sense of smell but also the body. As it is a thing that cannot be seen, one cannot escape it by noticing its arrival. The objects which were enjoyable or pleasurable when the Lord was nearby, now have begun to give distress. The sweet tune of Kuriñci is piercing into the body. The wind would give trouble to the external body only. But the music has entered into the body through the ear. The wind and music – both of them have

come over here having a covenant to trouble me. The evening, after sun set, has made me feel giddy – to lose my senses. The red and blackish beautiful clouds of the evening are tantalizing me, by appearing like the body and the limbs of Kṛṣṇa. All these happen because the lion among the cowherds with beautiful lotus like eyes has not appeared before me. I am in separation."

In the next verse comes another description. "We are alone. We have no place of security." The Alvar here simply gives a list of names which form into one group and intensify the grief. He even did not use any predicate, perhaps mere sight of them or hearing their names marks him tremble. The objects are the bells tied round the neck of the oxen or cows; the south wind, flute made up of Āmpal leaves, the evening that comes at the end of the day, fine sandal paste, the tunes of pañcamam and mullai and the cool north wind which usually would blow in some other season. A few other objects that trouble him are cited in another verse. "The cool north wind has become a very hot wind with regard to me" (9–9–4). In experience it is hot but she heard that others describing it as cool; that is why she names it as the cool north wind. The cool moon has become the scorching moon (or an object like fire). Even the soft bed of flowers appears to her a very harsh one. The reason being that it was a bed intended for two but actually only one has to occupy it now. (cited earlier).

In one other verse all the objects that disturb are grouped together. They have been stated with proper and apt attributes such as '*Kūr taṇ vāṭai*', '*clr uṟṟa akiṟ pukai*', '*taṇpacuñcāṉtu*', '*pōruṟṟavāṭai*' and '*taṇ mallikaippū putu maṇam*'. Here the north wind that has come to fight with her is described. It has come with all the necessary

accessories required for a fight. That is, it has come through the incense of Akil which troubles the two senses of smell and sight, the tune of the Yal̤ and also the paṇ of pañcamam. And it is further added with the fresh fragrance of the cool jasmine flowers and also with the cool sweet smelling Sandal paste (9–9–7).

In the 10th verse four objects that appear in the evening time and usually give joy for couples have been minutely described as objects that cause distrees. They are the good cows joining together with their sturdy mates and joyfully galopping swiftly so that the bells round their neck may sound. The flutes are making terrible noise. The bees after sucking honey, from the white shining mullai flowers that are found extensively, the black buds and jasmine, are humming with joy. The birds and animals are happy and joyous on account of the sexual pleasure they experienced. Even the sea jumping highly into the sky with its waves makes a roaring noise. "All these objects are disturbing me. What can I do amongst these, without his company or embrace?".

In this way the grief experienced in the dusk or evening on account of the separation of Lord Kriṣṇa has been explained by the poet. The Nature which has been portrayed minutely seems to be not in a sympathetic mood towards the separated lady. Actually it intensifies the grief of the lovers who are in separation or at least it seems to them like that.

In another subdivision (10–3–1) also, one finds a few lines composed in this strain. There also, the pining lady laments seeing the natural objects. The lady in love laments "My shoulders which are likebamboo are shrinking or emaciating day by day. The lovable Cukkoos are singing joyously. The flock of peacocks are dancing in a group"

These words are said not when the Lord is away. While he is with her she fears that he may leave her so as to go to graze the cows. She requests him not to go for that purpose. One has to remember that this happens in the morning and not in the evening when it is supposed the sexual desire will be at its height.

*Nature's sympathy towards mankind* : In the penultimate subdivision of Tiruvāymoḻi (10–9) an imaginery journey of devotees to Paramapada is described. There the poet gives vividly each and every detail of their journey. In that part the first two verses depict the sympathetic attitude of Nature towards them. The mother Nature celebrates the attainment of the devotees of Nārāyaṇa, by beating the drums, stretching hands to receive them and offering presents in gratitude. All these are done willfully and with a loving heart and not to an order by anybody. The beatlng of drums is the noise made by the beautiful clouds which are spread around the sky. Stretching of hands in order to give a reception is done by the hand like waves of the deep sea. Finally the greatful offerings made are the fertile crops that were borne by the seven islands.

The next verse speaks about the next world. It is stated that the useful rainy clouds appeared in the sky like golden pots with pure water to the brim which is considered to be one of the auspicious acts performed whenever a person has to be honoured. The seas with a beautiful look continuously roar perhaps to welcome them. The people of various worlds salute the devotees by erecting auspicious "thōraṇams" of mountains.

In this way Nature's sympathy towards mankind is ably portrayed here. Not only Nature is sympathetic but it seems it has identified itself with the author or Nature has merged itself with the author. One notices such a blending of Nature and human feelings in the poetry of the Āḻvār.

## CHAPTER VII

# RHYTHM AND METRE

Every work of literary art is, first of all, a series of sounds out of which arises the meaning.[1a] The poet's idea, imagery and above all his emotion are conveyed to the readers only through the words he uses in his poems. Prose also consists of words. But there is a lot of difference between the two The poet uses choice words in a regulated way so that it produces an aesthetic response in its readers. In the case of prose this effect is much less than in poetry. Some scholars study the effect of the sound of the word in poetry in isolation from its meaning. Though some poems appear to attract readers by sound values alone, really speaking that the effect cannot exist for long. So it should be remembered that words and the meaning they denote are integrally related. By this it is not denied that sound is an important factor in poetry. It specially occupies a pre-eminent place in Tamil Poetry. "It will be evident if one looks at the names of various kinds of Tamil poems and the sounds prescribed to such poems Viz., Narrative musical tone, musical conversation tone, jumping and trolling music and 'tūṅikal' melody. This cannot be understood by simply seeing the poems in written form."[1] By pointing this out Prof. A. S. Gṉanasambandam emphasises the importance of sound values in Tamil Poetry. This idea of importance of sound for poetry gets strengthend if one remembers the definition the famous commentator pērāciriyar gives to the word 'pā' – poem. He states 'pā or poem means – a sound which spreads widely in the air.'[2]

There are two different aspects of the sound values of a poem. One is the fundamental difference between sounds such as we find between a and o or K and C. This difference is the root cause for euphony in a poem. The other aspect is the one which forms the basis of Rhythm and metre. It is formed by the duration of the sounds, the stress, the frequency of recurrence of some sounds etc. Apart from these two, there is another aspect also which forms part of music. It will come under the study of 'paṇ'.

The first sūtra of the chapter on prosody in Tolkāppiyam mentions 34 organs or parts which constitute a poem. From the way the author enumerates them one can notice there are three divisions in them. The first six form one group which contains the fundamental units required for any poem and the last eight form another group which relate to whole treatises or continuous poems. The remaining twenty come under a separate group. Tolkāppiyar includes Yāppu, Tūkku, toṭai and pā as individual (separate) parts whereas in later prosodical works such as Yāpparuṅkalam etc. the commentators say 'yāppu' pāttu, Tūkku, Toṭarpu, and ceyyuḷ' are identical.[3] I think it is due to the evolution that has come in the prosodical study and treatment. Further there is another aspect also wherein one finds a difference between Tolkāppiyar and later prosodists. Tolkāppiyar speaks about twenty vaṇṇams and explains them.[4] Others do not mention vaṇṇams, instead they speak about Saṇdam which is more or less akin to the earlier. But there is another view that it is a development entered into Tamil on account of the impact of Sanskrit.

Many devices have been adopted by poets for the sake of Rhythm in poetry. They are introducing some sound patterns, repetition of identical or associated sound qualities

(Alliteration), Rhythm and the use of expressive sound or sound imitations.[5] It may differ according to the genius of each language. In respect of Tamil, Tolkāppiyar mentions eight different types of Rhymes or toṭais which occur either among the lines of a poem or inside a line. They are Mōnai (alliteration), etukai, muraṉ, iyaipu, aḷapeṭai, ceṉtoṭai and the niral niṟai and iraṭṭa yappu[6] Later prosodists have elaborated them in many other ways.

The opinion given by the English critics is worth remembering here. "Rhythm and Metre present problems distinct from these of 'orchestration'. They have been studied very widely and a huge literature has grown up around them."[7] The main types of metrical theories ordinarily discussed in English literature are the oldest type of 'graphic' prosody, the musical theory, the theory based on the acoustic metrics and the statistical method. Though much has been done in this field one has to agree with the result given by the authors of *Theory of literature*. They state that 'much is still abscure and controversial; bu metrics has to day restored the necessary contact with Linguistics and with literary semantics Sound and metre, we see, must be studied as elements of the totality of art, not in isolation from meaning".[8]

*The evolution of poetic forms*

Before proceeding to study the Rhythm in its poetry, it is proper to analyse the metre used in Tiruvāymoḻi. Tamil Metre has developed in various ways since Tolkāppiyar's time. "The famous ancient grammarian Tolkāpiyar speaks about various kinds of poems. But after the age of caṅkams even at the time of cilappatikāram itself the use of pāvinams (i. e. supplemental metres) are found. According to Iampūraṇar the earliest commentator of Tolkāppiyam, even Tolkāppiyar had the knowledge of pāvinams and the word

'paṇṇatti' used by him denotes them. It is not correct''.[9] This is the view held by Dr. A. C. Chettiar. The phrase paṇṇatti means, that which desires or requires paṇ or music. On this basis alone or assumption alone one cannot surely say that there were pāvinams available at the time of Tolkāppiyar. We have to agree with Dr. A. C. Chettiar, on account of the non-availability of pāvinams in the extant classics of the caṅkam period.

The pāvinams of supplemental metres are found in Cilappatikāram, in the verses of Saiva religious saints and the hymns of Āḻvārs and also in the latter Ciṉtāmaṇi and the other Kāvyas. Though there had been many prosodists during the early ages, the ancient works on prosody now available are only four Viz., The chapter on prosody in Tolkāppiyam The chapter on yāppu in Vīracōḻiyam, Yāpparuṅkalam and Yapparuṅkalak Kārikai. With the help of these works and also the only analysis on pāvinams published in the beginning of this century entitled *Viruttappāviyal*, a study is made here on the prosody of Tiruvāymoḻi.

## *Kinds of poems*

In respect of poems there are definite rules. Later on when the verses were classified under various sub-divisions, they were named as Tāḻicai, Tuṟai, and Viruttam. These three were called by the name 'Pāvinams'. These developed gradually and attained more or less perfection some where about the 11th or 12th centuries. i.e. by the time of the greatest poet of Tamil - Kampan. In the intervening period i.e. when there was religious revival in the country - before 10th century - when the Saiva saints and the Āḻvārs composed their hymns, the pāvinams were in a developing stage. So much so that the compositions of these religious scholars could not be assigned definitely to

any one category of poems. A few verses are such that they could be assigned to one group or the other, according to the way of analysis one adopts. Professor K. Veḷḷaivāraṉar writes as follows:

"As the definition given by the prosodical works on pāvinams are not rigid and precise, a poem which is said to belong to one branch can easily be assigned to another branch also. So generally it is not advisable or possible to restrict pāvinams to one certain type[10]". Further it may be noted here that the commentator of Vīracoḻiyam in his commentary on a sūtra which states the various kinds of Koccakak Kali gives examples for the first Variety i.e. Koccakakkalippā, then again writes that it is not a fault to consider them as Kali Viruttams[11]".

*Two broad divisions*

Among the ancient poems there are only two main kinds. One is Āciriyam which is of a liberal type i.e. which is flexible in respect of foot (cīr) or Taḷai. The other type 'veṇpa' alone strictly adheres to definite rules. It is not wrong to infer that the pāvinams also follow the pattern of Āciriyam or rather more flexible than even of Āciriyams. This is the first idea or concept one has to remember before an analysis of the pavinams found in Tiruvāymoḻi. Secondly, the religious poets such as Nammāḻvār were very particular that their compositions shall be such as to be set to music and sung. They express this idea overtly in many a place. On account of this they might not have followed the prosodical rules very strictly. So there may be a few deviations. One has to find out how far these verses in Tiruvāymoḻi adhere to the rules of prosody and what are the deviations.

The various categories of poems in Tiruvāymoḻi in general : Naccinārkkiniyar, another famous commentator of Tolkāpiyam feels that the verses of Tiruvāymoḻi should be taken as (considered as) Koccaka orupōKus[15]. But all the poems cannot be grouped under that head. Koccakam is a variety of Kalippā which includes under it many varieties which do not follow the rules strictly. Koccakam or Taravu Koccakam as it is called sometimes, will lack the perfect Rhythm of kalippā Ten decads of Tiruvāymoḻi belong to this category. The other verses come under 'pāvinams' - branches of poems. Among the three branches or inams of the four kinds of poems, Tiruvāymoḻi contains two branches Viz· tuṟai and Viruttam pertaining to the three kinds of major poems namely kali, vañci and Āciriyam instead of four. Among these the Āciriya' viruttam type possesses three different categories which contain 6 feet, 7 feet or 8 feet lines in them. Thus in all Tiruvāymoḻi contains one category of poems and eight categories of pāvinams. In it the category of poems viz. Veṇpā, Āciriyam and Vañci and also the pāvinam of Tāḻicai do not find a place. (However it is to be noted that the other three works of the Āḻvār are made up of āciriyam and Veṇpā and one of the branches of Kalippā called Kaṭṭaḷaikkalittuṟai). The categories of poems with their quantity are given in tabular form.

1) Taravu Koccakams - with 4 feet lines 10 decads.
2) Kali viruttams - with 4 feet lines 24 decads
3) Kalittuṟais - with 5 feet lines 23 decads.
4) Āciriya Viruttams - with 6 feet lines 22 decads
5) Āciriya Viruttams - with 7 feet lines 6 decads
6) Āciriya Viruttams - with 8 feet lines 5 decads
7) Āciriyattuṟais - with 8 and 5 feet lines 5 decads
8) Vañci Viruttams - with 3 feet lines 2 decads
9) Vañci tuṟais - with 2 feet lines 3 decads

Now the internal divisions or various types of them can be considered in detail.

I. *Koccakakkalippā - 10*

As pointed out earlier this is a variety which belongs to the four major divisions of poems enumerated in prosodical works. There are ten decads constituted by these poems. The special features of these poems are that they should contain four lines which are made up of three syllable feet. Its link or taḷai between the feet should mainly be Kalittaḷai or Veṇṭalai. The ten decads in Tiruvāymoḷi form into two groups, on e which contains verses which possess mainly Kali connections and the other which possesses Veṇṭaḷais to a large extent.

1) *Poems with mainly Kali link with the details*

| | | | feet ending with kāy | Kani ending | Two syllable feet | Kali connections | Veṇṭaḷais | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | (1-4) | 'Añciṟaiya' | 161 | 2 | 13 | 65 | 62 | 5 |
| 2. | (3-1) | 'Muṭiccōti' | 157 | 1 | 18 | 64 | 60 | 8 |
| 3. | (4-8) | 'ēṟālum' | 161 | 2 | 13 | 109 | 10 | 13 |
| 4. | (4-9) | 'Naṇṇātār' | 166 | - | 10 | 99 | 28 | 5 |
| 5. | (9-7) | 'eṅkānal' | 170 | - | 6 | 85 | 47 | 0 |
| 6. | (10-6) | 'Aruḷperuvār' | 173 | - | 3 | 76 | 56 | 0 |

2) *Verses with veṇpā connections to a large extent with detailed particulars*

| | feet ending with kāy | Twosyllable feet | Iyaṟcīr Veṇṭaḷais | Veṇcīr Veṇṭaḷais |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. (2-1) 'Vāyum tirai' | 113 | 63 | 59 | 73 |
| 8. (2-5) 'Aṉtāmat' | 124 | 52 | 47 | 85 |
| 9. (2-8) 'Aṇaivatu' | 85 | 91 | 71 | 61 |
| 10. (5-4) 'Ūrellām' | 128 | 48 | 41 | 91 |

It is to be noted here that these poems are found throughout the whole work. It is understandable that the poems which contain Kali - connections to a large extent can be called Koccakakkalippās. But how is it the poems with veṇtaḷais are also included under the group of Koccakakkalippas?.

These verses which contain veṇpā connections possess three syllable feet to a larger extent than two syllable feet. Further there are no connections between one line with the other. This is the main difference between veṇpā and the metre of this kind. This helps to produce tuḷḷal rhythm i.e. jumping and trolling music to a certain extent. Perhaps this is the reason why these verses have also been grouped under the head kalippā. As far the Koccakakkalis in Tiruvāymoḻi are concerned, they conform to this principle.

II. *Kali Viruttams - 24*

Next we shall take up one of the pāvinams or Supplemental metres called Kali Viruttams which constitute 4 lines each with 4 feet (or cīrs). This variety has been utilised to a large extent by poets. In this two syllable feet

should be more than three syllable feet. Tiruvāymoḻi contains 24 decads formed with this type of verses. These are divided into eight types. Each type possessing two different kinds; one kind strictly conforming to the connection rules i.e. which are having veṇṭaḷais and another kind which follows the similar feet pattern in all its 4 lines of poems. Though the verses of the first kind also possess the pattern of feet in them, the division made on the basis of connections seems to be more suitable and stronger. Because the alliteration and rhyme in the verses go only with this division. The details are given in tabular form in Appendix I. In it A gives decads which follow the connection rules along with the cīr pattern and B denotes poems which mainly conform with cīr pattern. A few deviations that occur in the verses are also noted there.

A few notable features that we find in these verses are given below:

1. In verses in the following seven decads, the number of letters in its lines are regular. If a verse begins with a 'Nirai' syllable then the number of letters are thirteen and if it begins with a 'Nēr' then it is twelve. They are: (4-2), (7-9), (8-7), (9-6), (8-4), (9-8) and (10-8) - the one exception is in (9-6) in its fourth verse fourth line.

2. Decads (6-6), (7-4), (8-6) and (1-7) contain twelve letters in their lines except the last line of each verse which contain only eleven. Decads (9-3), (1-10) and (3-3) - (these three) contain twelve letters in its lines if it begins with 'Nirai' and eleven letters if it begins with 'Nēr' - the exceptions are -

   Verse 5 line 1 in (1-10) and
   Verse 5 line 3 in (7-4) only.

3. The other ten decads do not conform to this pattern.

## II. *Kalitturais – 23*

This is a category which contains poems with four lines, each line consisting of five feet. There are 23 decads in this, which can be divided into two groups one conforming to one special pattern of feet connections and another which does not. The details are shown in tabular form in Appendix No. II.

### *General Remarks*

Type I is identical with example 3 shown in Viruttappāviyal under Caṉtakkalitturāi. (Page. 47).

Type V is identical with Viruttappāviyal – Ist rule (b) – (Page–12).

Type VII is identical with Viruttappāviyal Ist rule (Page–12).

Type VI resembles in pattern of feet with Viruttappāviyal rule 3 under Caṉtak Kalitturai (Page 47).

## VI. *Āciriya viruttams with 6 feet lines – 22*

There are 9 types in this. The details are given in Appendix III.

### *General Remarks*

Type 1 : Is identical with the 2nd example given in Viruttappāviyal.

Type 2 : Is exactly like the first illustration given in Viruttappāviyal.

Type 3 : Is same as the 7th example given in Viruttappāviyal

Type 4 : The fifth example given in Viruttappāviyal is slightly different from this one. The first foot also 'mā' in it whereas here it is viḷam.

Type 5 : Is also more or less like the 5th example in Viruttappāviyal.

Type 6 : Is also slightly differs from the 7th example of Viruttappāviyal in its 5th feet being Viḷam instead of 'mā'.

Type 7 : This differs with the 5th example of Viruttappāviyal in one respect. The 6th foot is 'mā' in it whereas here it is Kāy or Kani ending foot.

V. *Āciriya viruttams with 7 feet lines - 6*

There are 2 types in this. The details are given in Appendix IV.

*General Remarks:*

Type 1 : This is identical with the example given in Viruttappāviyal.

Type 2 : The last 'mā' foot in the previous type is shifted to the first place in this. This is named matta Kōkilam in Viruttappāviyal.

VI. *Āciriya viruttams with 8 feet lines - 5*

There are 2 types in this also. The details are given in Appendix V.

*General Remarks:*

To recite in tune with music and to express ideas elaborately and easily it is better to have verses formed with a number of feet than a few. So, the Āḻvār, when he intends to speak elaborately about anything, he chooses verses which constitute many feet such, as Āciriya Viruttams of 6 feet, 7 feet or 8 feet. It is to be noted that

these three varieties only are mentioned in the commentary on Yāpparunkalam which is a later prosodical work. The Āḻvāṟ has composed verses in more than one type even in this category of poems.

## VII. *Āciriyat tuṟai - 5*

This is a different category than the above stated varieties. In this category of verses, there are no restrictions on the number of feet a line shoul consist. Some lines may be long and some others short by a few feet. The Āḻvār takes up this kind of verses in the appropriate places. For this two illustrations are given below.

1. Unnaic Cintai ceytu ceytu Un Neṭumāmoḻi icai pāṭi yāṭi yen, munnait tīvinaikaḷ muḻuvē rarintanan yān (2-6-6).

2. Ukavai Yāḻneñ cam Uḷḷ urukiun tāmarait taṭaṅkaṇ Viḻikaḷin aka valaip paṭuppān aḻittā Untiru Vaṭiyāl (6-2-9).

The first two lines of two different verses of two decads are given above. The contemplation of God and singing His glories are acts which take a long time, but the act of destroying the sins of those bakthās by the Lord would not require much time. So while speaking about his act, the Āḻvār uses one full long line, and when referring to the effect of the act of God he says it in a short line. The lines in the first example are framed long and short perhaps only for this reason.

The second example also will strengthen this view. It is natural for one to speak at length about the eyes of the Lord and their effect. The act of the Lord i.e. demolishing the doll houses built by the young girls for play should have been done quickly. So naturally the portion which speaks of that has been framed shorter than the one which describes the eyes of the Lord. Likewise in many a place

the Āḻvār selecting apt categories of verses according to their contents to be expressed, will be evident if one minutely looks into them.

Definition: Āciriyat-tuṟai would contain 4 lines which contain 4 to 8 feet each. The penultimate line might be shorter than the others or the shortage in feet might be in any line between the first and the last.[13] Further it is stated the shortage may be either in the 2nd and 4th lines or in the first and the 3rd lines.[14] The verses found in Tiruvāymoḻi conform to the rules in *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai*, viz. 2nd and 4th lines being shorter than the other two. No other restrictions are imposed on them. The details are given in Appendix VI.

## VIII. *Vañci Viruttams - 2*

Now we shall take up verses which contain lines with less than the usual number of feet namely 3 feet and 2 feet. Verses with 4 lines each possessing 3 feet are called Vañci Viruttams. In this there are two decads.

*Type 1.* which conforms to Veṇṭaḷai.

(1-6) 'Parivatil' -

Exceptions: the first connections in the Ist and 4th lines of 10th verse do not agree with the rest.

*Type 2.* 'Āṭi Āṭi' -

This has to be included under this head only.

But its pattern could not be ascertained yet.

## IX. *Vañcit tuṟais - (3)*

Though the main Vañci Verse had lost its frequency even in the period of caṅkam itself, it is an amusement to

find the two supplemental metres of Vañci are being edopted by the Āḻvār in certain places for suitable use. Vañci tuṟai is a very small type of poem. It would contain 4 lines each with 2 feet only. Mostly the feet would be of 2 syllables. The Āḻvār chooses this kind of verse when he begins to advice people both at the beginning and at the end of his work.

(1-2) 'Viṭumin muṟṟavum' -

It conforms to veṇtaḷai. There are only 3 feet with 3 syllables in the whole decad. Exception: 1-4-2. Its proper form should be minnē and not minē.

(10-5) 'Kaṇṇan Kaḻaliṇai' -

This forms another type. No conformity to feet connections. The first feet are 'Mā' ending and the other Viḷam or Kāy ending.

(1-8) Ō'ṭum Puḷ' -

This Vañcit tuṟai is entirely of a different type. It forms a new type by itself. If there are five syllables in a line all of them would be 'Nēr'. On the other hand if it possesses 4 syllables in a line then any one of them would be a 'Nirai' syllable. Thus the note or music value is mainted. It is not a rule formulated by any prosodist. However verses formed on the basis of music naturally conforms to this rule. It is a new feature found here.

## *Conclusion*

The editor of *Viruttappāviyal* in his preface to that book declares that 'in the medieval days which preceded Kampan. Viruttams were only in an experimental stage, and so much so, that the viruttams in many of our religious literatures cannot now be called Viruttams at all[15]'. As far as the

metre of Tiruvāymoḻi is concerned, one can say without fear of contradiction that the position is not so very bad as the editor claims. The analysis done so far certainly justifies this. Many of the decads conform strictly either to the pattern of feet or the taḻai rules except for a few deviations which perhaps might have crept in owing to the wrong recitation and copying through the ages. There is no doubt that the Āḻvār had the supreme power and mastery over the compositions of various kinds of Viruttams in Tamil Literature.

## *Rhythm*

Apart from the metre, the rhyme or toṭai is also helpful for the Rhythm in poetry. Now we shall consider the various toṭais that exist in Tiruvāymoḻi. Toṭai has not been defined either by Tolkāppiyar or his successors. But from their explanation of various kinds of toṭais one can clearly understand what they mean by toṭai. The similarities that occur in a line among its various feet, and also various lines of a verse make the note (ōcai) pleasing to the readers and that is the main intension of the poets in using toṭais - Rhymes-in their poems. In ancient days a line was considered to be constituted with four feet only for the purpose of toṭais.[16] Later on more feet than four, or less than that were also accepted as normal. It appears from Tolkāppiyar that there were two types of lines, one based on the quantity of its letters and another based on the number of feet it consists.[17] So it is not improper to find toṭais in all kinds of lines. Tiruvāymoḻi contains all varieties of lines namely lines formed with 2 feet to lines formed with 8 feet. These possess various kinds of toṭais. We shall now analyse how the Āḻvār has used various types of toṭais to beautify his verses, by citing examples for each type.

*Koccakakkalippā*

(Example 1) : Āyum āmarulakum tuñcilun̲i tuñcāyāl
y x y x
(2-1-1).

This forms the second line of a verse. In it the following categories of rhymes (or toṭais) are found. In its feet we find iṇai mōnai which has been marked by - sign and Kaṭai iṇai etukai and mōnai which have been denoted respectively by marking under the occurrences by the signs of X and Y. These are in the various feet of one line. There is another variety which forms part of various lines in a verse. In this verse the second letter of the first 4 feet are identical. So it is said that this verse possesses etukai in lines.

(Example 2) : Aṭalkoḷ paṭaiyāḻi ammānaik kāṇpānn̲i
(2-1-4-3)

In this third line of the verse in the same decad we find 'poḻippu mōnai' which has been shown by underlining it.

(Example 3) : Uṭalamn̲ō Ūṟṟāyō Ūḻitō ṟūḻiyē (2-1-4-4)
x x

This possesses mōnai in all its feet and so is named as muṟṟu mōnai signifying complete identity in the initial letter of all the 4 feet.

This line in addition contains Kaṭai iṇai etukai which has been denoted with the X sign. The first line of the last verse of this decad is:

(Example 4) : Cōrāta epporuṭkum ātiyām cōtikkē.

This contains orū mōnai which has been shown by the mark under it. Likewise any member of mōnais or etukais can be pointed out from the verses of Tiruvāymoḻi.

## *Kali Viruttam*

This variety of verse is extensively used by poets and so considered to be an important one. When writing about this kind of verses Tiru Kuḻantai states: "It will contain 4 lines each with 4 feet. Mainly 2 syllable feet will be used in it. Among toṭais it will have mainly poḻippu or orū mōnais."[18] The first decad in Tiruvāymoḻi contains such type of verses. Its first verse which begins with 'Uyar Vaṟa', contains etukai in its four lines. In the first and third lines there are mōnais (identity of the first letters) in the first three feet. In the first line 'U' occurs in the first three feet in their initial position, and likewise in the third line 'a' occurs. This is named 'Kūḻai mōnai' by later prosodists In the second and 4th lines iṇai mōnais are found. 'Ma' is the letter so formed in the second line and t and c are the letters in the 4th line. Not only the same letters, even t and c are also taken as identical in respect of mōnai. Of course this is considered inferior to the first variety. The etukai – the identity of sounds or letters in the second and also the succeeding letters is called by that name – in lines is found invariably in all the verses of Tiruvāymoḻi. In the penultimate decad of Tiruvāymoḻi (Cūḻvicumpu) in the first line of the first verse in its first and third feet 'cū' and 'tū' form into Poḻippu mōnai. In the second and third lines, in all the three feet except 3rd and 2nd respectively the first letters are identical and that gives the verse Euphony.

## *Kalit-Tuṟai*

In this pentameter verse if the mōnais (alliterations) are in the first and 4th feet that will be appreciated.[19] A few examples are given from Tiruvāymoḻi to show the pattern of mōnais in Kalittuṟais.

(Example 1): Ninpacuñ Cāma nirattan kūṭṭuṇtu ṉiṅkinān (9-5-6)

In it the mōnai occurs in the first, third and 5th feet.

(Example 2): Kātal menpeṭai Yōṭuṭan mēyum karuṉāray (6-1-2).

Here the mōnai (a rhyme where initial letters agree) is found in the first and 5th feet only.

(Example 3): Tēṟu nirppampai vaṭapālait tiruvaṉ vaṉṭūr (6-1-10).

In this the mōnai appears in the first and the 4th feet only. In the last example, the agreement between the vowel 'e' in the first foot and vowel 'i' in the 4th foot is called ina mōnai'. In some other lines etukai – 2nd letter identity in Cīrs 1, 2 and 4[20] and in a few other lines etukai occurring in Cīrs 1, 2, 4 and 5[21] can be seen. Along with these, various other toṭais also are found in them.

*Āciriya Viruttams*

This variety which can contain six, seven or eight feet or more in its lines, also possesses all kinds of toṭais. Mōnai in first and 4th feet or 3rd feet is considered to be better by prosodists. This is so because when reciting the poem it would definitely help to make the rhythm (ōcai) pleasing to the hearers. The third foot and the 6th foot should be of the same pattern is the opinion of prosodists. In many verses of Tiruvāymoḻi it is like that too.

(Example 1): Aṇṭā vaṇṇam maṇkaraiya neyyūṇ maruṇṭō
x x x
mōyōnē (1-5-8)

There is no mōnai in this line. However there is the identity in the second letters (etukai) of 1, 2 and 3 feet

which compensate the lackness in the rhythm mentioned earlier.

*In lines with 2 or 3 fect*

Even in this type of lines there are both etukais and mōnais, which we have noticed in the earlier verses.

(Example 1) : ītum etuppumil īcan
x
māṭuvi ṭāten manane
x
pāṭumen nāvavan pāṭal
x
āṭumen aṅkama naṅkē (1-6-3)
yx

In this Vañci Viruttam in its first line there is identity of first letters, In all the three feet. It can be called complete identity or muṟṟumōnai. Likewise the mōnais that occur In the 2nd and 3rd lines may be said to be 'orū'. In the last line there is mōnai in the first two adjacent feet which can be called 'iṉai mōnai'. Of course there is regular etukai in all the four lines.

(Example 2) : Āṭiyāṭi akaṅka raiṉticai
x
Pāṭippāṭik kaṇṇirmal kiyeṅkum
x
Nāṭināṭi Naraciṅkā venṟu
x
Vāṭi Vāṭumiv Vāṇutalē (2-4-1).
x x

In this verse repetition of words are found. Further mōnai in adjacent feet in the first and third lines and complete mōnai in the 4th line are found. In the four lines there is the main variety of etukai also. If it is sung attuned with music, on account of its word repetition and the simple and small words in it and the proper toṭais and rhymes, there is no doubt that it will melt the hearts of its readers or hearers. It echos its contents also.

*Some specialities in etukais of lines*: (Assonance) As regards etukai, if the second letter of the first foot of a line is a consonant, the same consonant should occur as 2nd letter in the first foot of the other three lines for an etukai in lines. If the second letter is a vowel consonant (consonant with a vowel) then there is no necessity that the same should come there. Any one of the vowels may occur. Apart from this at times the second letters may not be identical but belong to one group such as stops, nasals or laterals. Then that will be called ina etukai or varukka etukai, which is considered to be an inferior type.

*Nasals* - Mellina etukai

Neñcam, encēy, maiṉta and tuñcum are the four first feet in a verse (1-10-4). Here, the second letters viz. ñ, n, and ṉ, belong to one category of letters i.e. Nasals. Likewise in (5-5-4) we find etukai in ṅ, ṉ and ṅ, in (3-10-1) etukai formed in n and ṇ and in (4-6-10) it is formed in 'm' and 'n'. All these are named 'ina etukais'.

*Retroflex Sounds*

Tāḷpa, Nīḷpo, Kēḻilā, and Vāḻvār - These four are the first feet of one verse (3-3-11). The second letters of these feet are not the same, but they belong to one category. So this is called 'ina etukai'. 'ḷ' occurs in the first two feet and ḻ in the later two. Therefore the lines can be taken as belonging to two separate categories also. In 4-2-1, and 8-3-10 l and ḷ from into one etukai which is named as 'inaetukai'.

*Stops* - Vallinam

Kākkum, Cērkkai, Vāytta and ākki - In these four first feet of a verse (2-2-9) K and t are forming into one etukai. This ina etukai is formed in stops or vallinam consonants. In these examples the second letters r and y found in

second and third feet are said to be ācu (or intermediary). In Tiruvāymoḻi apart from these two and the other lateral consonant l, the vowel consonants ḻi and ya also occur as 'ācus' or intermediaries[22]. A speciality found in Tiruvāymoḻi is that stops such as p and ṛ and k and ṟ form inaetukais[23].

From the analysis of the etukai in Tiruvāymoḻi one can infer certain special features that existed in the language at the time of the Āḻvār. Important among them are :

(a) The Vowel 'ai' preceded by any consonant was considered only as a short variety (Ref. 3-6-4 ; 5-7-4)

(b) Vaikalum, Kaikalaṉtu, Paykala and Meykala - These four occur, as first feet of a single verse (1-8-5). From these one can rightly infer that vai and kai might have been written and pronounced as Vay and Kay in those days. Such instances are found in other places too.[24]

(c) 'Ya' the vowel consonant forms etukai with 'Ca' in Ten places[25] and with 'Ka' in two places[26]. And the consonant Y forms etukai with Āytam[27]. Thus the 'Y' sound forming etukai with velar and palatal stops and āytam may help to study the real nature of the phonology of the then language.

(d) 'Ma' and 'Va' are considered to be mōnai letters by some later prosodists. But according to Tolkāppiyar they would come for both mōnai and etukai[28]. In Tiruvāymoḻi these two letters form into one etukai.

(Example) : Umārukaṉtu, avārukaṉtu, amāratu and amarartam

(8-1-4).

*Iyaipu* : (Rhyme)

The aforesaid mōnai and etukai are looked from the first foot of a line if it is in the foot or if it is in the lines then the first feet of various lines are taken into account in

this respect. But in the case of iyaipu it has to be looked at from the last foot of the line or from among the last feet of the various lines.

(Example) : The decad which commences with 'pukaḻu ṉalloruvan' (3-4) the first three or four lines of the first five verses and the 7th verse end with the same word 'enkō'. This is iyaipu in lines. In these very same lines to a large extent apart from the 6th or the final feet the 3rd feet also have the same word 'enkō'. This is iyaipu in feet. The same kind of iyaipu is found in the decad which begins with 'kaṭal ñālam' and which possesses 8 feet lines. The iyaipu formation is seen in the following few places also. (1) The first two or three lines of the first, second, 4th and 5th verses of 'Maḷlikai kamaḻ (9-9) decad. (2) The first three lines and the last two lines af the first and the second verses respectively of the decad commencing with 'Pāmaru mūvulakum' (7-6).

## *Muraṇtoṭai* - Oxymoron

"Naṇṇā *acurar ṉaliveyta* ṉalla *amarar poliveyta, eṇṇā* tanakaḷ *eṇṇuṉan* muniva rinpam talai ciṟappa" (10-7-5). In the second line the first foot and the 3 foot denote directly opposite meaning or contrary meanings. So it is named oxymoron or muraṇtoṭai. Though not in the first place the usage of 'acurar' and 'amarar' as 2nd and 5th feet and also 'poliveyta' and 'ṉaliveyta' as 6th and 3rd feet can be said to belong to the muraṇ or oxymoron. In the 3rd line of this verse and also in verse number 7 and 8 such constructions are found. The decad which commences with 'Nalkuravum celvum' (6-3) can be cited as an example specially suited for this. In it the Āḻvār groups together objects of contrary character and explains the mystery of the Lord being in all such forms.

The first two lines of the verses in this decad contain many oxymorons among its feet,

*Nalkuravum celvum narakum cuvarkkamumāy*

*Velpakaiyum naṭpum Viṭamum amutamumāy* (6-3-1)

*Nilal Veyil Cirumai perumai kurumai neṭumai yumāy*

(6-3-10)

In these examples if we reckon from the beginning of the lines then the first two underlined words in each are said to be in muraṇ. If it is considered from last foot of the line then the feet marked with are said to form kaṭai muraṇ. In the third line there are two words in the middle of the line which denote the contrary meaning. This is termed 'iṭaipuṇar muraṇ' by prosodists. A few other examples are: Varuvār celvār (8-3-7), aṅkum iṅkum (8-3-1) tāḷkaḷai - talaittalai (8-1-10) and Kālai mālai (9-10-1).

*Aḷapeṭai*

Elongation occurring in the first feet of a verse is called by this name. There are only a very few examples for this. One is found in the verse (2-7-9).

*Niral Niral*: In Toḷkāppiyam Collatikāram in the chapter on 'eccams' the author speaks[29] about Niral nirai and the repetition of the same word several times in a line which is named iraiṭṭai yāppu. These two are included as parts of toṭai also. A few authors of poetics consider this Niral nirai as one of the figures of speech[30]. Perhaps that shows its common usage and importance. Niral nirai is grouping the nouns or subjects together and ofter that the verbs or predicates together in such a way that each noun or subject in the first group would take respectively the verb or the predicate in the second group or line or vice versa. Examples are in the 8th and 11th verses of the first decad of Tiruvāymoḷi.

*Verse 8* : In its 3rd line two acts are mentioned. They are setting fire to the Tiripuras and imparting knowledge to the Devas. The names of persenages who did these acts are then stated in the first feet of the next line as Aran and Ayan. Then again their duties are mentioned in the remaining portion of the line. They are respectively destroying the worlds and forming or creating them. This is a proper example for the said toṭai.

*Verse 11* : The first line of this verse contains names of the five elements. And then in the beginning of the second line the special qualities - features of these five elements are given in the same order. One other type of this toṛal or figure is found in Tiruvāymoḻi (8-6-10). That verse gives the two places where the Lord stands and rests quiety. They are according to the Āḻvār his own heart and the place named, 'Tirukkaṭi-ttānam' surrounded by the groves of Kaṛpaka trees. The intention of the poet here is to mention that the Lord rests quietly in his heart and that he stands in the sacred place of Tirukkaṭittānam. But the words used to denote them are found in an inverse order. This is called etir niral niṛai or the chiasmus figure. It is a part of poetics and nothing wrong in including it under the toṭais also. There are other places also where Niral niṛai is found (8-9-2).

*'Iraṭṭai yāppu'*

The commentator of Tolkāppiyam Iḷampūranar states that occurring of one word throughout one line of a verse is called 'iraṭṭai Yāppu[31]. It is stated in respect of 4 feet lines. One cannot expect this kind of repetition of the same word throughout the line in longer lines. That is why perhaps it has been stated in the commentary on *Yāpparuṅkalam* that "it would not occur in more than four

feet of a line. Further if the last letter is not identical it is not a fault[32]".

*Examples* : In Tiruvāymoḻi (5-2) the repetition of the word 'polika' thrice in the beginning of the first verse and the repetition of the word 'Kaṇṭōm' occurring as the first, second, third and 6th feet of the first line of the 2nd verse can be said to belong to this toṭai in a way. The rhythm produced by the repetition of the same word is pleasing to hear. That is why it has been included as one of the toṭais or rhymes. In some other places too there are such occurrences (7-1-11). In Tiruvāymoḻi (9-3) the 3rd line of the second verse runs like this.

Avanē avanum avanum avanum' - This is a good example for the toṭai mentioned above.

*'Aṉtāti' or anadiplosis*

Tolkāppiyar did not include it as one of the toṭais. But prosodists like Nattattanār and the authors of *Yāpparuṅkalam* and *Kārikai* have included this as one of the varieties of toṭais. The final letter, syllable or foot of a line forming the first letter syllable or foot of the succeeding line is named as aṉtātit-toṭai[33]. The authors include the line also in this definition. It is not quite understandable, for repetition of a whole line under these circumstances, which could be called maṭakku would imply the presence of more than one stanza. In that case Aṉtātittoṭai sharply distinguishes itself from all other toṭais. Further there are also poems in which the final letter, syllable, foot or line of a stanza, respectively forms the first letter etc. of the next stanza. This kind of poem is also called aṉtāti. The Tamil lexicon defines it as "a poem in which the letter, syllable or foot of the last line of one stanza, is

identical with the first letter, syllable or foot of the succeeding stanza the sequence being kept on, between the last and the first stanzas of the poem as well". This condition can be fulfilled only in a work which extends to a number of verses. That is why the later grammars on pāṭṭiyal have included a͟ntāti as one among the so called 96 prapa͟ntās. So much so that we have to conclude that the a͟ntāti is at once one among the various kinds of toṭais and a kind of prapa͟ntā.

Even in certain Caṅkam classics one can find marks of A͟ntāti here and there. There are a few lines which contain the features of A͟ntāti. In *patiṟṟuppattu* and *aiṅkuṟu͟nūṟu* there are ten verses in each formed into an A͟ntāti.[34] Moreover peruṅkatai a kāvya considered to be of 5th century A.D. possesses A͟ntāti form in all its 131 long poems forming part of 5 Kāṇṭos. But it is a unique feat to compose a prapa͟ntā containing more than one thousand verses in the A͟ntāti form. The credit for this achievement goes to the poet of Tiruvāymoḻi only. Nammāḻvār is the only poet who successfully performed this stupendus task.

*Is Tiruvāymoḻi one Unit?* : A few scholars have raised a doubt whether the 11th verse of each decad in Tiruvāymoḻi is from the pen of Nammāḻvār or not. Many years ago a controversy regarding this took place and two articles supporting one or the other view are found in ce͟ntamiḻ.[35] In the recently published paper back edition of Tiruvāymoḻi text by S. Rajam, for not known reason, the 11th verse of each sub-division has been printed in a special type of script (letters). It is better to consider this question and to try to arrive at a definite conclusion.

In certain editions of Tiruvāymoḻi at the end of each sub-division containing 11 verses, a ve͟npā which gives the

gist of that particular portion in a nutshell has been printed and those veṇpās constitute an Aṉtāti among themselves. These veṇpās have been composed by the learned Ācārya who was the last one in the hierarchy of Ācāryas – viz. Maṇavāḷa Māmuni. It is true that the veṇpās were not composed by Nammāḻvār. But the case of the 11th verse attached to each decad is altogether different. It should have been composed by Nammāḻvār himself and it forms a part and parcel of the work. This can be affirmed on the basis of the following points.

1. At the end of each decad in the 11th verse invariably it is said 'these ten verses among the thousand'. As it is explicitly stated the total number is one thousand, the 11th verse could not have been composed by Āḻvār. If it is added the total would exceed the number 1000. This is the argument of some.

Answer to this: It need not necessarily be so. Because it is a custom or convention in Tamil to call a group a thousand even though the exact number may be a little higher or lower. It has also to be remembered that only on that basis the name Nālāyiram has been given to the collection of hymns by Āḻvārs though they are not exactly that number.

2. In the 11th verse one finds that the Āḻvār speaks of himself very highly. The Āḻvār who refers to himself in humble terms in many verses in Tiruvāymoḻi proper, will not do like this in the 11th verse alone.

No. This is also not true. Whenever occasion demands the Āḻvār speaks according to that. Further it is also a part of a convention of those days to speak highly of oneself when a person speaks considering himself as a third person. The Saiva saints Ñāna campaṉtar and Suntarar

and all the Āḻvārs except the first three and Tirumaḻicai follow the same method. So it is only proper to take it as a method that was the echo of the times.

3) In the Āḻvār's *Tiruviruttam* which contains 100 verses, the 100th verse itself happens to be one where he speaks as a third person about the effect of reciting his verses. If it is taken as a verse not from the pen of the Āḻvār then two defects would come to Tiruviruttam.

a) Tiruviruttam will lose the Aṉtāti form in which the last word etc. is identical with the first word etc. of the work.

b A 'kōvei' should have 100 or more verses and not less than that, Tiruviruttam would then fall short of a Kōvai by a verse. Why should these defects be attributed to the Āḻvār's work?.

4) The narration given in Maṇippravāḷa 'guruparamparais' that the line which was the cause for Nātamunikaḷ to go in search of the verses of the Āḻvār, is part of a 11th verse in decad (5-8). If we belive that account then naturally we have no reason to doubt the authenticity of the 11th verse. That even before the collection of Divya prapaṉta the 11th formed part of Tiruvāymoḻi becomes an indisputable fact.

5) That at the time of Aḻakiya Maṇavāḷa Nāyanār who wrote the *Ācārya Hṛdayam* the 11th verse was considered not a separate one is evident from his work. It will also strengthen the above mentioned points.

6) Lastly that the metre of the 11th verse is not different from the rest of the work is evident from the analysis of its metre. There are a few exceptions but such exceptions are there in other verses too. So, on that

a ccount also it cannot be said that the 11th verse was not composed by the Āḻvār. So it can surely be said that the doubt regarding the genuineness of the 11th verse in each decad of Tiruvāymoḻi is unwarranted, and there is no unassailable evidence to support it.

The desire of the Āḻvār was to compose his poem with a continuity in its verses and also in its contents. Those who do not know this only venture to suggest things contrary to that. One can also guess 'Niral niṟai Āyiram' (1-1-11) or Aṉtāti Ayiram, (1-4-11) might have been the name perhaps he wanted to give to his commendable work.

*Aṉtāti – various formations* : The main type one finds in Tiruvāymoḻi Aṉtāti is the last foot or syllable of a verse forming the first foot or syllable of the following verse.

*Example*

(a) The first Decad in Tiruvāymoḻi ends with the foot 'Viṭē'. The second Decad in Tiruvāymoḻi begins with the foot 'Viṭumin'.

The meaning of the words are not same. Likewise in many a place it is the form that follows and not the meaning is to be noted.

(b) Verse (1-6-7) ends with the foot 'Kaḻiminē' and (1-6-8) begins with the very same word. Here the meaning of the words is also the same. In a few places it is like this.

(c) Verse (4-5-1) ends as 'eḻumaiyumē'. The verse next to it commences as '*maiyakaṇṇāḷ*'. Here a letter 'mai' or along with a consonant Y in the middle of the last foot forms the initial part of the next verse.

(d) (1-6-1) ends with the word 'pūvē'. The verse that follows in begins with 'Matuvār'. It this it is not the last word or its part that continues but an entirely different word is found in the first place of the next verse. Anyhow there is some connection in the meaning of these two words. 'Pū' means flower and the following word 'Matu' means honey. Every flower contains honey and that is the relation between the two words here. This is called 'Ākupeyar Antāti' – a kind of figure of speech.

(e) Verse (5-7-2) ends as 'tamiyēnuk karuḷāyē'. The initial letter of the last foot is 'K' which has formed in the sandhi of (Ku+a). The next verse begins with 'Karuḷap puṭkoṭi'. In this the 'K', in the last foot which was formed according to sandhi rules and the normal 'K' in the beginning of the second verse have been considered as alike.

(f) Verse (2-3-4) ends as 'ākkinaiyē'. The verse that follows it begins as 'iniyār'. Only with a minute look one can find out there is antāti sequence here. There are a few occurrences like this one.

Next we shall consider the feature where the other feet except the last one, or more than one, form into an antāti, along with the last foot or without that.

(a) The penultimate foot (or two or more feet before it) forming an antāti is one variety (2-2-2) and (2-2-3 and 4).

(b) In a few cases not a single foot but more than one form the beginning of the next verse; vide (7-9-2 and 3) and (7-9-5 and 6).

(c) In (8-4) in its 6th verse which consists of 7 feet lines, its last 5 feet go to begin the 7th verse.

(d) In (9-9) in its ten verses which are formed with 8 feet, the last four feet of the last line form the first 4 feet of the succeeding verses. It is like 'Maṭakku' which is a repetition of the same line.

(e) A speciality is found in the Aṉtāti of the first 3 verses of Tiruvāymoḷi (9-2). All of them end with the same phrase 'puḷiṅ kuṭikkiṭaṉtānē'. How to differenciate the beginning of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th verses?. The chief aim of Aṉtāti is to give a clue to the recitors regarding the succeeding verses. The Āḻvār as an able poet adopts a fine method here, by which there may not arise any confusion in the minds of the recitors. He begins the second verse with 'Kuṭikkiṭaṉtu' and 3rd verse with 'Kiṭaṉtaṉāḷ kiṭaṉtu' and the 4th verse as 'puḷiṉkuṭikkiṭaṉtu'.

Lastly one more aspect of the Aṉtāti should be pointed out. The treatise begins with the phrase 'Uyarvaṟa' and its 1102th verse ie. the last verse ends with 'Uyarṉtē', so that the sequence is kept up between the last and the first verse also. Thus Tiruvāymoḷi shines – appears like a well blended garland. That is why the Āḻvār himself appropriately calls it 'Cōrvil Aṉtāti' (1-6-11) and (5-3-11), 'Tamiḻ mālai āyiram (1-7-11) and (5-6-11) 'icaimālai āyiram (3-2-11) and (4-8-11) 'coltoṭai Aṉtāti āyiram' (10-4-11). To consider the whole work as one big garland is one conception. But there are a few others who hold each word a flower and each verse is a garland made up of those flowers. Then Tiruvāmoḷi becomes a store house which contains thousand garlands.

***Paṇ***

Tradition says that Sri Nātamuni who collected and collated the four thousand verses of the Āḻvār's set up music tunes of ¾ ths of it with the help of some of his

near relatives, with regard to Tiruvāymoḷi in a few editions of its text only, the old paṇ and tāḷa have been furnished along with the carnāṭic ragas and tāḷas[35]. If one simply glances through them he can understand that same type of poem or supplemental metres are to be sung in various paṇs according to that marking. So it is evident that there is no direct connection between the various metres and the paṇs prescribed for them. Likewise for the one and the same paṇ various kinds of new rāgas are noted. To find out the correct paṇ and its usage, a special study by an expert in music is required. Further the enquiry made by this writer in many temples and his consultations with a few experts who recite the verses in temples, revealed to him that there is a difference between the reciting of Tiruvāymoḷi during the prescribed pūja hours and the recitation of the traditional Araiyars who are the descendants of the group appointed during the time of Nātamunikaḷ or so. A study of the special features of this is left to the musical experts.

Altogether 19 varieties of paṇs are noted in Tiruvāymoḷi. The number of paṇs found in *Tēvāram* is 23. The paṇs common to both are 14 only. Paṇs specially found in Tiruvāymoḷi are : (1) Mutirṉta kuṟiñci (2) Pālai yāḻ (3) Viyaṉtam (4) Paḷañcuram and (5) Ceruṉti. Names of various paṇs and the number of Tiruvāymoḷis to be sung in that are given below :-

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Nāṭṭam or Naṭṭarākam | 15 decads. |
| 2-3 | Naṭṭa pāṭai and iṉtaḷam each | 10 ,, |
| 4-5 | Kolli and Cīkāmaram each | 7 ,, |
| 6-8 | Pañcamam and takkarākam and Mutirṉta Kuṟiñci each | 6 ,, |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9–11 | Takkēci, Puṟa ṉīrmai and Paḷaṉ takkarākam each | 5 decards |
| 12–13 | Paḷam pañcuram and Kāṉtāram each | 4 ,, |
| 14 | Pālai yāḷ– | 3 ,, |
| 15–16 | Viyaṉtam, Kuṟiñci each | 2 ,, |
| 17–19 | Kaicikam, Paḷañcuram and ceruṉti each. | 1 ,, |

Different tāḷas are also marked for them.

This chapter may be ended with a relevant note by Sri Aurobiṉdō who was a poet as well as a critic. He gives the definition for the poem and the song. The verses of Tiruvāymoḷi satisfy both the requirements. "The real difference between a poem and a song that a song is written with a view to be set to musicalrh ythm and a poem is written with ear listening for the needed poetic rhythm or word music. These two rhythms are quite different. That is why a poem cannot be set to music unless it has either been with an eye to both kinds of rhythm or else happens to have (without especially intending it) a movement which makes it easy or at least possible to set it to music."[37]

# CHAPTER VIII

# SKILFUL USE OF PURĀNIC STORIES

Great poets have through the ages been accustomed to making deft use of stories from ithihāsas and purāṇas for achieving clarity and securing sustained interest. It has been said that even as wings help a bird to fly high up in air, purāṇic stories serve to heighten the excellence of poetic representation. That even didactic poems employ them to advantage is seen from *Tirukkuṟaḷ*.[1] In is but natural that religious poetry provides great scope for stories pertaining to their respective spheres. It would be a rewarding experience to study what stories are referred to by Nammāḻvār and how they enhance the literary excellence and appeal of *Tiruvāymoḻi*.

For the sake of convenience, the references to such stories may be classified under eight heads. Of these, far the largest in number are the stories relating to Kṛṣṇa's life. Some of the sections of Tiruvāymoḻi are almost exclusively devoted to the deeds of Kaṇṇan,[2] and in other places stories of Kṛṣṇāvatāra figure frequently.

### *Kṛṣṇāvatāra*

References to episodes in Kṛṣṇāvatāra are found in all in one hundred and forty-six places. Since some of the incidents referred to many times, the episodes that figure number twenty-nine. Of these, the following serve to reveal Kṛṣṇa's Saulabhya, easy accessibility-theft of butter and being tied to a wooden mortar, living among Cowherds

incognito, grazing cows, participating in Kuṭakkūttu (pot-dance), acting as Pāṇṭava's messenger, and functioning as Arjuṇa's Charioteer. In particular Kṛṣṇa allowing himself to be tied to a wooden mortar for the petty theft of butter made such a profound appeal on the Āḻvār's mind that as he sang of Kaṇṇan's saulabhya in the following lines.

"Matturukaṭai veṇṇai kaḷavinil uraviṭai yāppuṇṭu
Ettiṛam uralinōṭu iṇaiṉtiruṉtu ēṅkiya eḷivē?" (1-3-1).

"Our blessed Lord... stood in great fear bound tightly to the wooden mortar (by Yasodha) for theft of butter while churning curd with the rod. What a marvel (of saulabhya)" he fell into a trance, so says the tradition, lasting six months. The Supreme Purusa whom even the immortals find it difficult to know, is represented as stealing butter and allowing himself to be tied round his belly to a wooden mortar by his mother, and rolling with it. The Āḻvār wondered at the extent to which the Lord's *saulabhya* would go. He thinks again and again of how Kṛṣṇa was born of a certain mother and how he came to be brought up as the son of another, how He sided the Pāṇḍavas in the Mahābhārata War and by performing many a miracle and by the clever display of his strategy he brought victory to their side. As often as he thinks of these incidents they affect his inner being and make his mind melt, says the Āḻvār. On such occasion, for a second time, he fell into a trance. A beautiful reference to it is made in the following stanza:-

"Tāyam cerum oru ṉūṟṟuvar maṅka ōraivarkkāyt
Tēcamaṟiya ōrcāratiyāyc ceṉṟu, cēnaiyai
Nācam ceytiṭṭu naṭaṉta ṉalvārttai" (7-5-9).

"To bring about the downfall of the cunning and envious hundred cousins, he openly entered the battle field as the Charioteer of the five Pāṇḍava Princes and destroyed the enemy forces completely.........". Mark the words,

"Tēcamaṟiya ōr cāratiyāyc ceṉṟu"

he helped the Pāṇḍavas not on the sly, but by publicly functioning as their charioteer. What a saulabhya!

Again, he speaks of ("pukkaṉal tērppākā" (8-5-8) and of losing his mind to the Lord who, not considering his innate greatness, went as the charioteer -

"Nāṭuṭai mannarkkut tūtucel ṉampi" (6-6-4)

What a felicitous way of expressing this when the mother of the Āḻvār says that her daughter has lost her mind in contemplating on this saulabhya. The following verses bespeak the mental attitude of the Āḻvār (the daughter) -

"Āyar koḻuṉtāy, avarāl puṭaiyuṇṇum māyappirān"
(1-7-3).

"Wonderful Lord! The darling of the Cowherds, and yet chastised by them (by theft of butter).........."

"Annai pulampappōy aṅkōr āykkulam pukkatum
Kāṇṭaliṉṟi vaḻarṉtatum kañcanait tuñca vañcam
ceytatum" (6-4-5).

"While the distraught mother was wailing over separation from Thee, The entry into a cowherd family and life in their midst incognito and crushing the cruel Kamsa......".

The Āḻvār derives great delight in discoursing on the manifold deeds of Kṛṣṇa's valour and might. The pen picture that the Āḻvār presents of three of the events on a single canvas is a testimony at once to his poetic genius and to religious insight - with unerring insight, Kṛṣṇa sees through the vile motive of the innocent looking Pūtanā who appeared in the guise ot a fond mother, he clings to her bosom as if unsuspecting and suckles her life out; divining the dastardly intention of the asura who appeared as a wheel so that none might suspect him, Kṛṣṇa despatches

effortlessly with a kick of his infant legs; Kṛṣṇa feigns fear and stands with tears in his eyes when his mother threatens to beat him up with a stick for stealing butter. Telling us that these acts of Kṛṣṇa make an indelible impression on his mind, the Āḻvār touches our hearts too by his superb delineation.

"Peyyum pūṅkuḻal pēymulaiyuṇṭa piḷḷait tēṟṟamum
pēr̲ntōr cāṭiṟac
Ceyya pātamonṟāl ceyta n̲inciṟuc cĕvakamum
Neyyuṇ vārttaiyuḷ annaikōl koḷḷa n̲īyun tāmarai-
kkaṇkaḷ n̲īrmalkap
paiyavē n̲ilaiyum van̲tu en̲n̲eñcai urukkuṅkaḷē"
(5-10-3)

The crushing of the seven ferocious bulls in order to win the hand of Nappinnai, lifting the Govardhan Hill, partaking of the offering intended for Indra, chopping off the thousand heads of Vāṇa, wedding Rukmiṇi after successful strategy and conquest and other deeds are described with deep feeling.

Having referred to the innocent and unconcerned look of the child after having suckled the demoness, he again describes the extraordinary wisdom of the child that suckled with relish the poisonous milk of the deceitful pūtana and feels, overwhelmed by this demonstration of Kṛṣṇa's wisdom –

"pēcci viṭanañcamulai cuvaitta mikuñānacciṟu kuḻavi"
(4-8-3)

He sings of the Lord who lifted the Govardhan hill thereby offering shelter to the herds of cows from torrential rain and protecting them from the calamity that threatened to overtake them.

Malaiyai eṭuttuk kalmāri kāttup pacuṉirai tannait
Tolaivu tavirtta pirānai'' – (3-5-3)

Mark the appropriateness of his lifting the rock (Kal) as a protection against 'Kalmāri!' 'Kalmāri' meaning torrential rain, raining cats and dogs as the idiom goes, literally means rain of brick bats (Kal); and there could be no more effective way of meeting it than by the hill or rock, literally (Kal), stone!

In the last stanza of the fourth sub-section of the seventh hundred, from the reference to śaṭakōpa who is deeply attached to the devotees of the Lord who lifted the hill, we seem to get the impression that this incident is taking place now before our very eyes and that along with the Āḻvār we get under cover of the rock for shelter. Such is the skilful portraiture.

"Kuṉṟa meṭutta pirān aṭiyāroṭum
onṟi ṉinṟa caṭakōpan" (7-4-11)

Tiruvāymoḻi contains references to Kṛṣṇa's conquest in order to be united to Rukmiṇi; and likewise it refers to his clasping the seven fierce bulls and breaking their necks to marry Nappinnai. As the Āḻvār puts himself in the position of a nāyaki and sings Purusōttama these references to the Lord's love are specially appropriate; and so is the story of his encounter with vāṇa and cutting off his thousand limbs for the sake of helping his daughter Usha. Hungering for God Union, the Āḻvār sings; "Thou clipped the thousand arms of Bāṇāsura and knocked out his conceit and the false sense of security. Thou hast Garuḍa for thy vehicle (3-8-9) – when am I to reach thee?" These lines suggest that he has only to will it, the destruction of the enemies is certain and he has only to decide to come and there is a fitting vehicle ready for transport.

The episodes are so juxtaposed in the songs as to bring out Kaṇṇan's paratva (transcendence of ultimacy) and his *Saulaphya* (intimacy). For example: dissolving the seven worlds and lying on the tender banion leaf, giving the world the Gita teaching (4-8-6); enabling Arjuna to get the Pāsupadāstra; bringing the Brahmin's sons back to life; granting Sisupāla the bliss of serving at His feet.

Talking of the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa, the Āḻvār says:-

"Tīrttan ulakaḷa͟nta cēvaṭimēl pū͟ntāmam
cērtti avaiyē civanmuṭimēl tānkaṇṭu
pārttan teḷi͟ntoḻi͟nta pai͟ntuḻāyan perumai
pērttum oruvarāl pēcakki ṭa͟ntatē?" (2-8-6)

"Arjuna saw for himself that the flower garlands offered at the holy feet that purify and that measured the three worlds, adorned the head of Siva and once and for all learnt definitely the supremacy of the Lord who wears the green ever-fresh tuḷasi. Is there any further need to demonstrate that again?" "Sisupāla's words of vile abuse, the intensity of his hatred for Kṛṣṇa, and the magnanimity with which Kṛṣṇna permitted even Sisupāla to serve at his feet are explained in a telling way thus.

"Kēṭpār cevicuṭu kiḻmai vacavukaḷē vaiyum
cēṭpāl paḻam pakaivan cicupālan tiruvaṭi
tāṭpā lataiṉta tanmai aṟivārai aṟintumē" (7-5-3).

If even the listener could not bear the words of abuse, how could Kṛṣṇa put up with them? Note the 'e' in vacavukaḷē. The 'e' is suggestive that Siśupāla had nothing but abuse for Kṛṣṇa. Even for such an old foe, an ancient enemy, there was pardon. For generations place at the Lord's feet is assured to him. What a greatness! Such descriptions of Kaṇṇan's deeds abound in Nammāḻvār's works. Do they not indicate that he was the very embodiment of love for Kaṇṇan?.

*Rāmāvatāra*

Chronologically Rāmāvatāra is long anterior to Kṛiṣṇāvatāra; yet details about the earlier avatāra appear to have spread in Tamiḻnāṭu much later. There is no mention of them in Paripāṭal. But episodes from Rāmāvatāra occur in thirty nine places in Tiruvāymoḻi ; if the repetitions are not counted, the incidents recorded would number nine.

'Kaṟpār Irāmapirānai yallāḻ maṟṟum kaṟparō' (7-5-1) Need the seekers of spiritual wisdom study anything other than Rāmāvatāra, asks Nammāḻvār. Yet, in the very sub-section where this question has been raised, the Āḻvār has not failed to describe other avatāras also. For the reason that of the three avatāras where the Lord appears in human form, Rāmāvatāra is the most complete, references to the other avatāras are perhaps to be taken as applying to Rāmāvatāra.

Rāmā's bravery and heroism are described in extenso. The destruction of Lankā, the aiming of deadly arrows so as to reuce to ashes the ruler of Lankā and the rāksasa families (hordes), piercing through the seven mighty (huge) trees with one arrow, cutting off the nose of Sūrpaṇak and putting an end to Mācina Māli and Māliman – these are very prominently mentioned. Besides these, the following episodes are also referred to-offering a giffting the kingdom of Laṅkā to Rāvaṇa's brother (7-6-9), taking birth as Dasaratha's son (10-1-8), granting mōksa to all the creatures of Ayōdhya (7-5-1), and aiming pellets from the bow to correct the hunch (1-5-5).

'Kūnē citaiya uṇṭaivil niṟattil teṟittāy Gōvindā' conveys a significant conception. It must be taken to refer to Rama who as a young boy used to aim earthen pellets at the hunchback, Mantarai; for the bow (vil) is his special

insignia. The expression 'Gōvinda' is taken by some to indicate that the reference is to the episode where a certain woman who supplied Kṛṣṇa sandal paste was cured by him of her hunch; but there are weightier reasons favouring the former interpretation; for one thing, there is reference to the bow (vil) a unique insignia of Rama; for another, the aim of releasing the arrow is said to be for removal of the hunch and it fits in best with Rama, who granted mōkṣa to all the creatures of Ayōdhya, moving and non moving, including even grass, not on grounds of merit, but out of innate generosity. That the son of Dasaratha left his kingdom to his younger brother is universaly acknowledged. Even later after he went to the forest he gave a kingdom only to an younger brother is a felicitous description.

'Tampikkē virinir ilaṅkai yaruḷi' (7-6-9)

Kulasēkara Āḻvār too says,

'Iḷaiyavarkaṭku aruḷuṭaiyāy Irākavanē'.[3]

"'Oh Rāghava! thou bestowed special favour on younger brothers"

The killing of Māli and Māliman are referred to twice, while the cutting of the nose of Sūrpaṇakā is mentioned but once (2-3-6). Imagining himself to be a nāyaki suffering from intense pangs of separation, the Āḻvār sends emissaries and says - "Rama destroyed with ease the high ramparts surrounding the mighty Asura's (Rāvana's) capital and his heroism is ever upsurging" (6-1-10). He destroyed Laṅkā and killed Rāvaṇa for the sake of Sīta.

'Kompupōl cītai poruṭṭu' (4-2-8)

The implication is when he performed such remarkable deeds of valour for the sake of Sīta, why does he not bestow his grace on me?. Rama's unparalleled valour and marksmanship are brought out while referring to the several

ways in which he wielded the bow and arrow. He addresses Rama as :-

'Tennilaṅkai eriyeḻac ceṟṟa villi' (3-6-2)

(one who aimed an arrow that set Laṅka ablaze)

Marāmaram paiṉtāḷ eḻuruva oruvāḷi kōttavillā' (2-6-9)

(the bowman who pierced seven huge trees with one arrow) Sugrīva entertained doubts about your prowess; and to set at rest his misgivings, you aimed an arrow that pierced through the trees; when that is so, can't you help me who have abundant faith in thee? In the verse -

'Kaṇai yonrālē ēḻmaramum eyta emkārmukilai' (9-1-2)

the invocation, 'Karmukil' strengthens this interpretation. Should it be asked : was Rama right in destroying the whole of Laṅkā? the answer is found in

"Ilaṅkai arakkarkulam muruṭutĪrtta pirān emmān"
(2-7-10).

"My Lord, who killed the wicked rākṣasās of Laṅkā, or he who knocked the wickedness out of the rākṣasās of Laṅkā". He did no harm to Vibhīṣaṇa and others like him. The wording of the stanza may also suggest that he only destroyed their (evil tendencies or nature) or power for evil.

*Vāmanāvatāra*

Next to Kṛṣṇa's deeds, those of Vāmana claimed a greater hold on the Āḷvār's mind than even Rama's. In no less than forty five places Vāmana is referred to. The Āḷvār grows into ecstasies over Vāmana's beauty of form, the deftness of his feet, the grandeur of his deed, the generosity with which he placed his feet on all alike, without distinction of high or low - Vaśiṣṭa or caṇḍāḷa. These make an unforgettable impression on the Āḷvār and he glorifies them. The following lines are memorable :-

'Ivvulaka mūnrum uṭannirəiyac cirumāmēni nimirtta en
centāmaraikkaṉ Tirukkuraḷan' – (8-10-3) and

"Tirumā nīḷkaḷal ēḷulakum toḷa
Orumāṇikkuraḷāki nimirnta vak karumāṇikkam"
(1-10-1)

In these places, the beauty and full significance of the expressions:

"Cirumāmēni nimirtta Tirukkuraḷan"
"Māṇikkuraḷāki nimirnta Karumāṇikkam"

deserve attention. His feet are praised as –

"Perunilam kaṭanta nallaṭippōtu" (1-3-10) and
"Maṇviṇ muḷutu maḷanta oṇtāmarai" (8-6-7).

Describing him and his most wonderful deed of measuring the worlds, the Āḷvār refers to him as "Māyaammān" (6-9-2) (wonderful Lord), "VanKaḷvan (6-1-11)" consummate deceiver), one who came in the guise of a Dwarf to taKe over the world – "Ñālam koḷvān kuraḷuruvākiya vañcane" (3-8-2) and "Matiyināl Kuraḷ māṇāy Ulakiranta Kaḷvarku" (1-4-3), (the clever deceiver who out of his wisdom came as a dwarfish mendicant begging for land). The Āḷvār presents a superb account of how the Lord of infinite, unexhaustible resources, who is bounteous in his gifts and who gives to everyone whatever one might want, did not even know how to put his request, and expressed it clumsily, being never accustomed to asking for favour, and how when the request was granted, the legs quickly measured up the worlds and appropriated what was offered. This wondrous deed of the two feet of the Lord are described with marvellous effect in two lines. The following may be cited as instances –

"Ariyāmaik kuraḷāy nilam māvali mūvaṭi enru
Ariyāmai vañcittāy" (2-3-3)

and

"Kunṟēl pārēḻ cūḻkaṭal ñālam muḻuvēḻum
Niṉṟē tāviya nīḷkaḻal āḻittirumāl". (8-3-8)

The mind of the Āḻvār felt drawn to this episode; and he thinks again and again of this and his mind melts.

"Aṭiyai mūnṟai iraṉtavārum aṅkēṉinṟu āḻkaṭalum
maṇṇum viṇṇum
Muṭiya īraṭiyāl muṭittuk koṇṭa mukkiyamum
Noṭiyumāṟavai kēṭkuṉṭōṟum eṉṉeñcam ṉintanakkē
karaiṉtukum'' (5-10-9)

The Āḻvār says that whenever he hears accounts of these deeds, his mind becomes steeped in joy and begins to melt.

*Narasimhāvatāra*

In the avatāra known as Narasimha where he combined in himself the form of man and of lion, the Lord tore the wicked and mighty asura, Hiraṇya, with his sharp finger nails, and blessed the son, Prahlāda. This is referred to in Tiruvāymoḻi fourteen times. The wonder that one and the same Divine form exhibited at once anger for the father and loving kindness for the son is extolled.

"Oru mūrttiyāyc Ciṟṟattoṭarul peṟṟavan aṭikkīḻppuka
ṉinṟaceṅkaṇmāl" (3-6-6).

Prahlāda is unique in being the recipient of the Lord's blessing even when he was angry. The description suggests that just as in the Lord's form there was the combination of the brute and the human, in his attitudes too divergent trends were juxtaposed. The redness in the Lord's eye (Ceṅkaṇmāl) is attributable to extreme anger caused by Hiraṇya's attracious conduct as also to overflowing love for Prahlāda. That this is a consequence of his inherent nature is indicated by the expression 'Māl' Profoundly

impressed by this, the Āḻvār refers to it again in another stanza and concludes by saying that the Lord's greatness is beyond comprehension. The son said 'Kaṇṇan is everywhere'; the irate father asked: "Is he present then in this pillar?" and kicked a pillar standing before him in his palace and out come therefrom Narasimha to punish him. In order to ensure at once that the devotee's words were not falsified and that the boon granted to Hiraṇya was not contravened, Narasimha tore the asura's chest with his finger nails at dusk and came to the son's rescue. Such is the Lord's greatness.

"Eṅkumuḷan Kaṇṇan enṟa makanaik kāyṉtu
... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
Ciṅkappirān perumai ārāyum cīrmaittē" (2-8-9).

As if in reply to those who might dispute whether it was proper to have killed Hiraṇya in this fashion, the Āḻvār offers a fitting reply.

"En ṉeñcattuḷḷiruṉtu iṅku iruṉtamiḷ ṉūl ivai moḻiṉtu
Van neñ cat tiraṇiyanai mārviṭaṉta vāṭṭāṟṟān" (10-6-4).

Hiṟanya's downfall was the outcome of his hard heartedness and a loving heart is the Lord's home. To the devout, the Lord's grace flows of its own accord. In commenting on the following lines, the author of the Iṭu suggests a very interesting interpretation worth considering.

"Unnaic Ciṉtaiyināḷikaḷṉta Iraṇiyan
akal mārvam kīṇṭa en munnaikkōḷariyē" (2-6-6).

At the mere mention of the name Titumālirumcōlai, which just serves to mark off one hill from another, the Lord hastens to bless him who pronounces the word, saying "He has chosen to refer to my hill"; such a benevolent Lord cleaves the heart of the asura to ascertain if his words of abuse really issued from his heart (i. e. if it was

consciously uttered)! The suggestion is, he was ready to forgive him, if it did not come from his heart. The Āḻvār regards Hiraṇya's destruction as an act of kindness done to himself, and hence the reference to "enkōḻari" (My Narasimha). In another place, a mother describing the mental state of her daughter pining from separation from her lover and searching for him, says "the Lord issued that day from the pillar in answer to the devotee's prayer," she feels can't such a Lord come and bless me now? She is ever seeking the Lord calling out 'Narasimha' (Nāṭi nāṭi Naraciṅkā) (2–4–1). Another mother representing to the Lord of Srīraṅga the pangs of separation experienced by her daughter, says that, firmly convinced that the Lord would come from anywhere and at any time, she searches for him in the expansive earth –

"Iru̱nilam kaituḻāvirukkum" (7–2–1).

These stories are so deftly used as to strengthen out devotion to God.

*Varāhāvatāra*

The boar is not noted for its beauty; no wonder, most people don't like it. But the Lord who takes birth, not out of subjection to Karma, but out of his own freewill and compassion could take any form he likes for reasons best known to Him. He chose to take birth as a boar. This boar is represented by Nammāḻvār as most beautiful. Towards the end of Tiruvāymoḻi, the picture is presented of the Boar standing with the universe in its teeth, having dug it up.

"Kōla varāka monṟāy ṉilam kōṭṭiṭaikkoṇṭa eṉtāy" (10–10–7) Such a Lord would accept the Āḻvār also is the suggestion; hence the expression "Eṉtāy" and the reminder implied of his relationship to the Lord. It is well to remember

in this context that in the penultimate stanza of *Tiruviruttam*,[4] the Āḻvār refers to Varāhāvatāra, calls this form *Ñānappirān* and says that he has seen none greater than that.

It is usual to say that the Lord took as his consort the goddess of the Earth whom he rescued. To get the lady of his heart he assumed the form of a Boar, got to the bottom of the earth and liberated her. Such a person need not now take any such form, he does not have to go in search of her. Can't he bless her (the Āḻvār) here and now? Such is the plaintive cry of the distraught nāyaki.

"Ṉin tiru veyiṟṟil iṭaṉtu ṉīkoṇṭa ṉilamakaḷ kēḻvanē" (7-2-9) "The Consort of the Goddess of the Earth whom you rescued with your teeth". The act was undertaken not only for His sake but also for the well-being of the entire world. Hence, the Āḻvār says: "Peruṉilam eṭutta pērāḷā" (8-1-2). Of your own accord, without the Earth itself seeking your help, you went after it and recovered it; when that is so, won't you redeem me, even I make such plaintive appeals? The wondrous deeds of the Boar are referred to in eleven places in Tiruvāymoḻi.

*The other Avatārās*

Besides describing these five avatāras, the Āḻvār refers to three others, and they are – the Fish (Matsya), the Tortoise (Kūrma) and the Horse (Hayagrīva) avatāras.

"Māvāki āmaiyāy mīnāki māniṭamām" (2-8-5)

"Kaṟkiyām innam kārvaṇṇanē" (5-1-10) is the reference to the prospective Kalki avatāra. Speaking of Kaṇṇan, the Āḻvār says 'your going with Rama was not to your liking' ("Irāmanaiyum uvarttalai") (10-3-10), this is a clear reference to Balarāma. Like wise the reference to Parasurāma is explicit in his praise of that hero as the

vanquisher of twenty one generations of Kings of the solar race – "Irupattōrkāl aracu kaḻaikaṭṭa venṟi nīḻmaḻuvā" (6–2–10). There is no mention of Hamsāvetāra in Tiruvāymoḻi.

*The churning of the ocean*

Tirumāl churning the ocean is praised in no less than fifteen places. But in none of these is it spoken of as the milky ocean.

"Āḻkaṭalaik kaṭainta tuppanē" (4–7–5)
"Alaikaṭal kaṭainta appanē" (8–1–1)
"Kurai kaṭal kaṭainta kōla māṇikkam" (8–4–4)

These refer to his might and glory in achieving such a colossal undertaking. That he undertook the churning for the sake of the devas, that his using the serpent for the rope and a mountain for the churning rod bespeak his benevolence and his insight and skill in doing the act. Getting ambrosia is the grand outcome. "Alaikaṭal kaṭainta āramutē" (7–2–5). The rarest Nectar churned the roaring seas and broughtforth Ambrosia. This act was performed in answer to the prayers of the dēvas; and the amrit was obtained for their sake. This signifies that for the sake of the good, he is ever ready to render every kind of help. The greatest of the great, He considers it his rare opportunity to be of service. Hence the Āḻvār sings: "He who is foremost among the Gōpās, bestows amrita to the dēvas" (1–7–9).

*Protection to the elephant in its distress*

To protect Gajēndra, the Lord rushed from Paramapada, rescued it from the jaws of the crocodile and granted darsan to both Gajēndra and the Crocodile. That he granted the blessed state to both is oft repeated. The Āḻvār describes this so graphically that any reader seems to

witness the whole episode enacted before his very eyes In eight places this incident is described in Tiruvāymoli. The natural beauty of the pond in the midst of the flower garden, the elephant in dire distress lifting up its trunk in prayerful appeal, and the Lord of grace, resembling dark clouds both in his resplendent hue and bounties in showering his gifts on all alike, rushing to its rescue are described in an inimitable way in the following lines –

"Moymmām pūmpoḻil poykai mutalaic ciṟaippaṭṭu ṉiṉṟa
Kaimmāvukku aruḷ ceyta kārmukilpōl vaṇṇan
kaṇṇan" (3-5-1).

Exponents of the purāṇas are accustomed to depicting the hot haste with which the Lord rushed from Paramapada, rescued the elephant, and wiped its tears with his own apparel duly warming it. When he could have protected the elephant, from where he was (i.e. from paramapada itself), why did he hasten to the scene of trouble? The Āḻvār furnishes an answer, says Mahāvidvan Kāñchīpuram Aṇṇaṅgarāchār Swami.[5] The relevant stanzas speak of "Toḻuṅkātal kaḷiṟu aḷippāṉ" (3-1-9), and "Tan nīḷkaḷal ēttiya āṉaiyin ṉeñciṭar tīrttapirāṉ" (7-10-8). What was the elephant's prayer? What was its real distress? The trouble was it was caught up in the jaws of the crocodile; and it would have to meet with death. While that danger was there, the elephant really experienced a greater danger. It had set its heart on offering at the blessed feet of the Lord the flowers it had gathered; and its real distress was, having been caught up in the jaws of the crocodile, it would not be able to worship the Lord and offer flowers at his feet. To remove this difficulty, and to enable it to fulfil its desire, the Lord had necessarily to come to the spot and receive the floral offering. If he stayed on in paramapada, he might from there itself have recsued the elephant from the jaws of the crocodile, but how could he

have responded to its real desire for worship? By his action he saw to it that his reputation for existing primarily for the sake of his devōtees was unsullied. That he lived up to his reputation is indicated by the Āḷvār in the following lines -

"Maḷuṅkāta ñānamē paṭaiyāka malarulakil
Toḷumpāyārkku aḷittāl uncuṭarccōti maṟaiyāte"
(3-1-9)

This idea is clearly brought out by Srī Rāmānuja in his Commentary on the relevant stanzas in Chapter-IV of the Bhagavad Gītā.[6] It is a grand notion in the realm of religious consciousness. With this in mind the Āḷvār sings the glories of the Supreme Lord, who dispelled the suffering of the elephant caught up in the lake filled with cool, deep waters, covered over with lotus, as without a peer.

"Pūṉtaṉpunal poykai yānaiyiṭar kaṭiṉta
pūṉtaṉ tuḷāy en taniṉāyakan" (2-8-2)

When the elephant cried out "Oh! the ultimate cause of all" (Āṭimūlam), the Supreme Being who is also the Universal cause came to its rescue.

*Other stories*

How He blessed Mārkaṇḍēya is referred to thrice. We have often heard accounts of Lord Siva coming to the rescue of Mārkkaṇḍēya; perhaps the Āḷvār also is aware of such a belief. Hence, in one place he says -

"Pukkaṭimaiyināl tannaikkaṇṭa Mārkkaṇṭēya navanai
Nakka pirānum anṟu Uyyakkoṇṭatu Nārāyaṇanaruḷē"
(4-10-8)

It was through Lord Nārāyaṇa's grace that Siva was able to help Mārkkaṇḍēya. In the two othar places also the same idea is expressed.

The Āḻvār also refers to the burning up of Tripura by Siva. Since Lord Nārāyaṇa is the indweller in all deities the Āḻvār reckons the destruction of Tripura as the Lord's own deed (Pura moru mūṉṟerittu) (1-1-8). That the God with matted locks has the Lord for his inner Ātmā is indicated in

'Veḷḷa ṉirccaṭai yānum ṉinniṭai
Vēṟalāmai viḷaṅka ṉinṟatum' (5-10-4)

In other places, where Lord Siva is described as

'Nuṇṇuṇarvin ṉīlār kaṇṭattu ammān' (6-10-8)

(the Lord of wisdom and the blue throated Siva) and

'Mākattiḷa matiyam cērum caṭaiyānaip
Pākattu vaittān' (10-4-6).

(The Lord has the god with the crescent moon as part of his body); how Siva became blue throated and got the crescent moon are referred to. Siva gave his head as place to the crescent moon that fell at his feet. The Āḻvār thinks that as Siva contemplated on the Lord, He was pleased to offer him a place on the right side of his own body. Hence the description "Valattanan Tiripuramerittavan" (1-3-9). (He who burnt up Tripura is in the right side of his body).

Another storyabout Sivapirān, mentioned thrice in Tiruvāymoḻi, occurs on all the three occasions in the course of Parōpadēsa, when the Āḻvār is engaged in teaching mankind what they have to do. On two of these places, the episode figures when the supremacy of Tirumāl is emphasised. Hence it need cause no surprise that the Āḻvār talks of Tirumāl's supremacy (Lordship) over Siva.

The story goes that Siva committed the most heinous sin of cutting the head of Brahma and that in consequence the skull of the victim struck to the palm of Siva's hand; Nothing that he did to expiate for his sin helped him to get

rid of the skull that had been implanted in his palm, until Hari came to his rescue by offering him alms. This is referred to in the following lines :-

'Māpāvam viṭa araṟkup piccaipey
Kōpāla kōḷari ēṟu' (2-2-2)

While teaching the paratva of Nārāyṇa, this story is mentioned again :-

'Pēcaṉinṟa civanukkum piramantanakkum piṟarkkum,
Nāyakan avanē, kapāla ṉanmōkkattuk kaṇṭu koṇmin' (4-10-4)

The episode of kapāla mōkṣa - getting freed from the skull establishes the over Lordship of Tirumāl.

Later, when exhorting people to go to Tiruvanaṉtapuram and worship the Deity of that place, the Āḻvār makes a brief reference to Gōviṉda who removed the suffering of Kumaran's father (Siva),

"Kumaranār tātai tunpam tuṭaitta gōvindanār" (10-2-6) and states conclusively that Gōviṉda is the supreme Lord who created the great Gods and all others :

'Ulakuyir tēvum maṟṟum paṭaitta em paramamūrtti'
10-2 7)

Whoever wishes to follow the path of a truly religious life would do well to have stead fast faith in one Deity. Even those who preach religious toleration like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa stress this. "Instead of digging at several places and not striking water, it is best to dig deep at one place; that is the best way to get the water[7]" says Sri Ramakrishna in an effective way with the aid of an interesting analogy. The Āḻvār's thinking proceeds on similar lines. That is why, he talks of Nārāyaṇa as the indweller in all Gods. This is quite an acceptable approach. It is

essential not to speak ill of other Gods or hate them. That tendency is never met with in the Āḻvār. 'Kumaranār Tātai' (The sire of the great Kumaran) "Nuṇṇuṇarvin Ammān" (the Lord of wisdom) are respectful forms of address adopted in referring to Siva.

Besides this, how the three Gods adore Tirumāl's blessed feet, how he destroyed the asuras in their battle with devas and how he sent Garuḍā to conquer Siva, Kumara and Agni in the battle are also referred to.

In expounding philosophical truths in a readily intelligible form the Āḻvār uses purāṇic stories to great advantage. That the whole universe is the Lord's Vibhūti (possessions-glory) is a pholosophical truth. Instead of presenting it in an abstract manner it is put in the mouth of a *Nāyaki* who is suffering from the pangs of separation from her lover. Looking at several objects of the world, she speaks of their intimate relationship to Him. Touching the earth with her hands, she is represented as saying "This is vāmana's earth" ; noticing the calves passing by, she embraces them, saying these are the calves grazed by Gōviṉda; if she happens to butter collected by cowherd women, she says it is what He ate; if she sees beautiful forms, she says they are forms of the Lord who measured the worlds, and dances in joy. Observing herds of cattle in extensive fields, she follows them hoping to see Kaṇṇan there. Both in her lucid moments and when she is overpowered by love of God, her mind is fixed on the Lord. While stating that all the time she is devoted to the Lord, it is mentioned that the world is the Lord's possession (prakāra); and He is the possessor there of. Stated thus, this is so easily graspad. These doctrines are expressed in Tiruvāymoḻi (4-g) with a facility of expression and intensity of feeling that is hard to excel.

Likewise, in another sub-section in Tiruvāymoḷi (5-6) when the Āḻvār identifies himself with the Lord and expresses as the words of a nāyaki suffering on account of separation from the Lord, that the entire universe is *Visnu-maya*. That profound idea that the paramātma and the jīvātma are one is indicated. The mother, in representing the mental state of her daughter says, "My daughter speaks as if she measured up the land and seas, she rescued it from the bowels of the sea, dissolved it at praḷaya and protects it (by keeping it in her body). The lifting of the Gōvardan hill, killing the asuras, helping the Pāṇḍavas by exhibiting his skill and strategy, churning the ocean - these and similar deeds are spoken of as her deeds. The mother says that it may be due to possession by the Lord who is resplendent and of the hue of clouds.

She is represented as going about saying that the lifting of the mountain, the killing of the seven fierce bulls to win the hands of Nappinnai, gracing the calves as an youngster, later protecting the bands of cows are her own deeds. She refers to herself as the chieftain of the cowherds. She speaks of herself as the one who crushed Laṅka. On these occasions, the Āḻvār imagines himself to be the nāyaki and pours out her mind, identifies herself with the Lord in his varied avatāras. They stress one important idea about the Deity, namely, that He is all the worlds; they are His manifestations, vibhūtis. Purāṇic stories come in handy for expressing this idea.

Not only does the Āḻvār make use of these stories individually, but he also brings together stories from different contexts in an inimitable way. For example, lifting the Govardan and protecting cattle and cowherds from raid is taken along with the measuring of the worlds in the Lord's strides. Again, grazing cattle and crossing

the worlds at one stretch are mentioned together. The conquest of Lankā and appearing as a dwarf are put together. Tearing the heart of Hiraṇya and leading the army for the sake of the Pāṇḍavas are clubbed together. Likewise, piercing through seven huge trees with one arrow and getting betwist two trees and knocking them down are mentioned together. Thus by describing the various achievements of the Lord, singly and in combination, the Āḻvār describes the Lord's boundless excellences and derives infinite bliss. These stories and the stanzas which portray them acquire fresh and rich meaning and beauty. In consideration of this accession of new beauty, the Āḻvār himself speaks of his songs as a work composed to provide a feast of nectar to devotees.

"Toṇṭarkkamutuṇṇac Conmālaikaḷ" (9-4-9).

# CHAPTER IX

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY

It will be of great help in estimating the worth of a poet if we enquire into and understand the relationship and continuity of that poet with those who preceded and succeeded him. This must be done by bringing to light the similarities and parallels of a poet's ideas, poetic structure and language with those to be found in others. When this is attempted, great care has to be exercised. We cannot come to any conclusion on the observation of some parallels which are superficial and accidental. Besides, we have to make sure whether the poets who are taken for comparison have not taken over their ideas and idioms from a third common source. The authors of "Theory of Literature"[1] put this idea as follows :

"Parallels must be exclusive parallels; that is there must be reasonable certainty that they cannot be explained by a common source, a certainty attainable only if the investigator has a wide knowledge of literature, or if the parallel is a highly intricate pattern rather than an isolated 'motif' or 'word' ".

In this comparative study, the first task is to collect the portions that have similarities. Only after analysing these similarities carefully one can form an idea of the relationship of a poet with others. We shall henceforth examine the similarities to be found in Nammāḻvār's *Tiruvāymoḻi* and the works of the poets who lived earlier and those who were contemporaries to him.

Similarities can be classified under four groups: 1) Of ideas, 2) language, 3) the combination of ideas and language, and 4) sequence of ideas. It is not necessary to conclude that Nammāḻvār wrote his works only on the model of the work of an earlier poet, from the fact that there is an idea or two in Nammāḻvār, either exactly in the same way or in a little modified form, which finds its place in that earlier work. We can decide that, only on the basis of the method or manner of expression. It is possible by this study of similarities to assess the evolution of ideas in the course of time.

*Tolkāppiyam*

*Tolkāppiyam* is the oldest extant grammar in Tamil. Most of the poets have composed their poems only within the framework of the grammatical rules laid down in Tolkāppiyam. However, in some cases they have departed from them also. We had occasion to see in an earlier chapter the similarities and dissimilarities between the Akapporuḷ grammar of the Tolkāppiyam and the hymns of the same nature in the Tiruvāymoḻi. It is the same even with regard to the prosody. With reference to the similarity of ideas, Tolkāppiyar, when speaking about the Akattiṇai, mentions Māyōn (Lord Viṣṇu) as the deity presiding over the land of Mullai.[2] Speaking about the Puṟattiṇai he mentions Māyōn under the category of general exceptions, as follows.

"Māyōn mēya manperuñciṟappil tāvāviḻuppukaḻ
pūvai ṉilai"[3]

In this context, the chief excellence of Māyōn is said to be his eternal glory. Also, we see the poet comparing Māyōn with a king. From this it is clear how people in those days considered the king as Māyōn. In *Tiruvāymoḻi* when the heroine grows ecstatic over the sight of things that remind

her of the Lord, the mother of the lady says: Tiruvuṭai mannaraik Kāṇil Tirumālaikkaṇṭēnē ennum" (4-4-8). It is obvious then that an idea current at the time of Tolkāppiyam was still in usage at the time of Nammāḻvār. It is well known that the author of *Tirukkuṟaḷ*, considered to have lived in between the times of Tolkāppiyar and Nammāḻvār, has expressed the same idea.[4]

*Pattuppāṭṭu*

In *Pattupāṭṭu* and *Eṭṭuttokai*, pieces of Caṅkam literature, the places where God is spoken about, are very few. Apart from the isolated references here and there, Muruka, the Cēyōn, is sung in the long poem *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* and in the eight verses of the *Paripāṭal*. Similarly apart from the stray references, the seven verses in the Paripāṭal deal exclusively with Māyōn.

The author of *Perumpāṇāṟṟuppaṭai* refers to Māyōn at Tiruvehkā (a part of Kacci) as "Pāmpaṇaip paḷḷi amarṉtōn."[5] The same author refers to Māyōn residing in Kacci as "Nīlniṟa Uruvin neṭiyōn."[6] It is a matter of some surprise that Nammāḻvār has not referred to the Lord residing in either of these places. Perhaps the reason is that he lived in a place remote in the southern Tamiḻ Nāṭu. The author of *Mullaippāṭṭu* mentions as a simile at the very commencement of his work, the deed of the Māyōn lifting his foot to measure the great earth. This sport of the Lord is glorified in many hymns of the Āḻvār. He sings that his heart melts in longing for the Lord when he thinks of this sport of the Lord (5-10-9) and (2-2-3).

In the part of Tiruvāymoḻi that contains the teachings of the Āḻvār while explaining the transience of things, the Āḻvār sings:

"N̲inaippān pukil kaṭal ekkalin n̲un̲man̲alir̲palar
enaittorukaṅkaḷum ivvulakāṇṭu kaḷintavar" (4-1-4).

This idea is found in *Maturaikkāñci*.

"Tiraiyiṭu man̲alinum palarē uraicela
malartalai Ulakam āṇṭu kalin̲ tōre.[7]

In the *Malaipuṭukaṭām*, too, it is stated that the people who die with temporal glory, interred with them are larger in number than the particles of sand on the rivers (cēyār̲u) formed by the turbid floods flowing fast from hills.[8]

Some methods of worship and attributes of the Lord mentioned in the *Tirumurukār̲r̲uppaṭai* find a place in the songs of the Āḻvār. When describing the Brahmins of Ērakam in the act of worshipping Muruka, the author of *Ār̲r̲uppaṭai* says that those Brahmins keep their folded palms on their heads.[9] The Āḻvār sings on the outburst of love for the Lord as:

"Kaitalai pūcaliṭṭu" (4-7-1) and (5-1-7)

signifying that the folded palms go to the head in reverence when the author of Ār̲r̲uppaṭai speaks the singing of the Brahmins, he says: "Nāviyal Marunkil navilappāṭi."[10] The Āḻvār also refering to his poetic work, says:

"Nāviyal pāṭal āyiram" (9-2-11)

and again "Nāviyalāl icaimālaikaḷ ētti" (4-5-4). Nakkīrar, singing on Muruka, says: "Nin aḷan̲tu ar̲ital mannuyirkku arumai."[11] Nammāḻvār too speaks in many places in glorious terms that the Lord is hard to conceive of.[12] Nay, he goes one step further and says that It is hard for the Lord Himself to understand Himself (8-4-6).

### *Paripāṭal*

(a) 'Cēyōn' : Now, we shall look into the similarities to the Paripāṭal. Certain conventions found in the 8th and

the 21st verses here on Cēyōn are found in Tiruvāymoḻi also. In those times the idea of superiority or inferiority among Gods had not got into the minds of the people. Yet Nallaṉtuvan, in the 8th song, says, that Tirumāl along with other denizens of heaven went to see Cēyōn. The very commencing lines contain this idea. In the compositions of this poet, the custom of swearing and promising on oath finds a place. In the Tiruvāymoḻi, too, this custom is referred to as, "Cūḷ" or 'āṇai' meaning swearing (10-10-2). The swearing is done in the name of a variety of objects as is known from Nallaṉtuvan's lines. Once, the line, meaning "O friend! You are swearing in the name of Vaḷḷi, do not do so"[13] occurs. Swearing implies sincerity and determination. At the end of Tiruvāymoḻi, when the Āḻvār insists that the Lord, who had coalesced with him through love, ought not to abandon him now but that he ought to take him, swears in the name of Lakṣmi and in the very name of the Lord (10-10-2).

That this follows an ancient custom is obvious. There are other places where this custom is adopted.

The Paripāṭal shows that people worshipped Muruka, for the purpose of achieving victory in the war. The word 'arcanā'[14] is used in this context. The very same word is employed in one of the hymns of the Āḻvār, where the head of the Devas is said to worship the Lord at Tiruvanaṉta-puram (10-2-6). In a song devoted to Murukan, another poet prays that he should live at the feet of the Lord for ever as now."[15] The Āḻvār too, sings in the same strain in many places.[16]

These references are mentioned here only to show that certain similarities are reflected in the matter of religious worship etc. between the Caṅkam classics and the Āḻvār's hymns. It is not to show that one borrowed from the others.

"The three worlds with many gods are a grove reared by emperumān the supreme God Nārāyaṇa", says the Āḻvār.

'Peyta kāvu kaṇṭīr peruṉtēvuṭai mūvulakē' (6-3-5). In paripāṭal, the ladies who are expecting the grace of Muruka are compared to a grove which is expecting the rains for its growth.

"Vaieyiṟṟu eyyā makaḻir tiṟan inip
peyya uḻakkum maḻaikKā maṟṟaiyē"[17]

The rain is indispensable for the growth of the grove. But the grove has no power to bring it when it desires. If it rains the grove will flourish. Otherwise it has to live in expectation and perish in the end if it fails. This is the nature of a grove. It is suggested that the relation between the jīvas and the God is like this only.

(b) 'Māyōn': It is but natural that one should find a good number of ideas with regard to Māyōn in Tiruvāymoḻi quite similar to those in the *Paripāṭal*. While one can infer that for both' Vēdas are the original source, the authors of Paripāṭal have unequivocally declared that they compose their poems in line with the Vedic thought[18]. Nammāḻvār has not chosen to do so. Nevertheless, the successors to Nammāḻvār do explain *Tiruvāymoḻi* as containing the vedic thought[19]. There is a traditional view that Nammāḻvār sang his sacred hymns after having been blessed by God's grace with the comprehension of the true import and suggestion of the vedas.

The author of the first paripāṭal sings:

"Tinkaḻum Kanaliyum Nī; Civanum piramanum Nī
Avar toḻilum Nī; eḻili, vicumpu, ṉilam, imayamum Nī"

This idea is found in many places in *Tiruvāymoḻi*. Is not the same idea of the *paripāṭal* echoed in "aran ayan ena

Ulakaḻittu amaittu uḷan'' (1-1-8)? similarly, the other ideas could be seen to have been expressed in the hymn "Nīrāy ṉilanāy'' (6-9-1) and other hymns.

In the second *Paripāṭal*, the account of Tirumāl ripping the earth open in the form of a boar is vividly portrayed. Tiruvāymoḻi mentions this sport of the Lord in many places (5-7-6). We find in the *Paripāṭal* the poet saying that he prefers to perform the congregational worship along with his kith and kin[20] and does not want beatitude through divine worship for himself alone as that would constitute some selfishness and individualism. Similarly the Āḻvār, when he talks of the modes of worship and the fruits thereof, makes it appear that the worship is and ought to be done in group[21].

A great many Ideas on Tirumāl in the third *Paripāṭal* are found in the Tiruvāymoḻi also. *Paripāṭal* declares that the feet of the Lord removes rebirth.[22] The Āḻvār cries to the Lord that he cannot endure it any more and prays the Lord to put an end to his suffering by offering His feet.[23] The same song addresses the Lord as the indweller in everything as the heat in the fire etc.[24] A part of this idea can be seen in -

"Karavicumpu erivaḷi ṉīr nilan ivaimicai
varanavil tiṟalvali aḷipoṟaiyāy ṉinṟa paran'' (1-1-11).

The *pāripātal* makes out that Māyōn took many births, that none made Him take those births, that these births are not the result of Karmas but that they are descents willed by the Lord due to sheer grace.[25] This idea is put in Āḻvār's words as

"piṟappil palpiṟavip perumān'' (2-9-5)

So pithily that it has a beauty all its own. Again, the Paripāṭal states that the Lord has the glory of being the

goal of the inquisitive rearch by all the 25 tatvas through all the four Yugas.[26] But the Āḻvār's hymn is in the form of appealing to the Lord to free him from all the 25 categories (10-7-10). In the commentary on the Paripāṭal – "Pāl" means Puruṭan and in the Tiruvāymoḻi "Pāḻ" means Mūlaprakrithi or primordial matter. This difference is noted here.

In the 4th Paripātal, the story of Prahlāta is narrated. Together with this, the account is given of the Lord as the Man-Lion, killing Hiraṇya tearing his chest with his sharp claws. The Āḻvār sings on this theme many times. Such an account is given also when the Lord of Vāṭṭāṟu is praised (10-6-4). In another hymn, this destruction of the demon Hiraṇya is spoken with great devotion and the Āḻvār concludes by wondering whether one could comprehend the glory of the Lord Narasimha (2-8-9).

Does God have a form? This question has been asked from time immemorial. The Paripāṭal gives the answer thus. "O Lord! "Manakkōḷ ṉinakkena vaṭivu vēṟilai".[27] The Lord assumes that form which the devotee imagines and cherishes. He does not have his own form in particular. This is the meaning. The Āḻvār, too, sings in the same strain (2-5-10) and (3-6-9).

The expression: "evvayinōyum ṉī" 28 in the paripāṭal brings out the all-pervasiveness of the Lord. The name 'Viṣṇu' for the Lord connotes the same meaning. Even in the very first decad of the Tiruvāymoḻi, the Āḻvār refers to this all - pervasiveness twice with the expression: '.Eṅkum paraṉtuḷan" (1-1-7, 10).

The thirteenth Paripāṭal composed by Ṉal eḻuṉiyār contains some comparisons which for the most part are in the shape of describing the Lord's form. The Lord, with

the radiant disc and luminous conch on either hand, is described as a great black cloud in the raining season flanked by the sun and the moon.[29] The Āḻvār uses this simile with slight modifications. The Lord with his disc and conch, appears to him to resemble a lovely blue mountain flanked by the sun and the moon (8–2–10). (It may be of interest to note here that Iḷaṅkō[30] and Kampan[31] make use of this imagery when describing the Lord).

The author of the paripāṭal verse is delighted by the vision of the Lord's feet, eyes and the mouth which appear to him like the blossomed lotus with its petals unfolding upwards from the leaf. The leaf is compared to the body, the lotus is compared to the feet, the eyes and the mouth.[32] It is common to compare the various limbs to a flower. But unusually the Āḻvār explicitly compares the Lord's body to the lotusleaf (9–7–3). The previous line compares the feet etc., to the lotus.

The poet in the Paripāṭal concludes by saying that it is the result of the penances he performed in the previous births that the privilege of worshipping and praising the Lord was accorded to him.[33] The Āḻvār, shares this view when he declares that the privilege to worship the Lord at Tiruvanantapuram with flowers can only be the result of the penances and good deeds done in the earlier births (10–2–4).

In the eighteenth Paripāṭal verse, Iḷam peruvaḻuti, the Pandiya king sings the praise of the Aḻakar at the Tirumāliruñcolai. The Āḻvār too, has two decads of hymns on the same deity. There are certain surprising similarities between the two works. According to the Āḻvār, Tirumāliruñcolai is the pride and ornament of the South (10–7–4).

But, the author of the Paripāṭal sings in the very commencement of the poem that Tirumāliruñcōlai, the abode of Māyōn, stands out more glorious than any other renowned hill on the earth, than the hills that remove the hunger of people and among the hills where Lords dwell. Tirumāliruñcōlai is easily the holiest. He adds that only Māyōn, wearing the Tuḷasi garland, can bestow liberation.[34] That the Tirumāliruñcōlai, where Māyōn dwells will fetch the same liberation much more easily. So, he says, the hill has to be extolled. The hill itself is potent enough to remove the delusions of the minds of all who worship it.

Similar are the lines that the Āḻvār has sung on Tiruvēṇkaṭam. Vēṅkaṭam itself will usher liberation. The sacred hill itself will wipe out all the sins of mankind (3-3-7,8). Here the name of the hill alone changes. Otherwise the ideas remain the same.

Thirdly, Vaḷuti, exhorts mankind to go there and worship the hill that is as holy as the Lord; if that were not possible, he asks the people to worship it from where they are. "Cenṟu toḻukallīr kaṇṭupaṇiminmē."[35] The Āḻvār, in the first verse of the Tirumāliruñcōlai patikam (2-10) describes the Cōlaimalai and declares that to go on to the hill is the means to beatitude. In the second, he sings: "Patiyatu ētti eḻuvatu payanē" (2-10-2). If it were not possible for some to travel to the hill, they can worship it from where thay are and get the final release. It is clear that this echoes the manner of worship of the Paripāṭal.

We can point to another similarity in the same song, which discloses to us an ancient custom. The Āḻvār sings that he went with his hands folded in reverence, in the direction of Tirumāliruñcōlai where the shrine was situated

(10-7-3). This is a measure of the Āḻvār's depth of devotion and love.

This action of the Āḻvār seems to follow the prayer to all of Iḷam Peruvaḻuti in the Paripāṭal, that everyone should approach the holy hill with folded palms in reverence in the direction of the shrine[35].

In the Paripāṭal, the references to the incarnations of Lord as Varāka (Boar), Hamsa (swan) Narasimha (Man-Lion) are more described than those of Kriṣṇa and Balarāma. But at the time of the Āḻvār the references to, Kriṣṇa, Vāmana, and Rāmā are described in detail. This may be construed as the changes that were taking place in the history of Tamil Literature.

*Puṟanāṉūṟu*

Muriñciyūr Muṭiṉākarāyar praises peruñcōṟṟu Utiyan Ceralātan for his cultivated virtues and describes him as one who has in him, the distinctions of the five great elements rolled in one. He has the forbearance of the earth, the broadness of the sky, the power of the air, the destructive force of the fire and the protectiveness of water[37]. The Āḻvār, even in the very first Tiruvāymoḻi tells us how God is the sound, the destructive force, the power, protective nature and the forbearance respectively of the five elements ether, fire, air, water and earth.

"Karavicumpu erivaḷi ṉīrnilam ivaimicai
Varanavil tiṟal vali aḷi poṟaiyāy ṉinṟa paran (1-1-11)

Except the nature of ether all the others are identical.

In another verse in the puṟaṉāṉūṟu, the poet Poykaiyār extols cēramān Kōkkōtaimārpan as one who possesses all the four lands in his kingdom. He is 'Nāṭan' because he

has 'Kuṟiñci' and 'Mullai' landscapes. He is 'ūran' because he has 'Maruta' landscape. He is 'Cērppan' because he rules over the 'Neytal' landscape in his country, where the sea roars for ever with its rolling cool waves.

"Nāṭan enkō ūran enkō" etc.[38]

The Āḻvār adopts the same method in praising the Lord as the indwelling spirit in every thing.

"Pukaḻum ṉal loruvan enkō, poruvil cīrp pūmi
enkō" etc. (3-4-1 to 9)

The usage of 'enko' is the common feature in both these works.

*Kuṟuṉtokai*

The methodology of love-making as found in the Caṅkam love-literature is comparable with the same in divine devotion found in the Āḻvār's songs. The Āḻvār, imagining himself to be the lady in love with the Lord, wants to send her parrot, with a message to the Lord, to tell Him how she is not able to bear the biting cold of the northern wind. It is as if her bones are gored and strings are sent through them (1-4-7). The same sentiment is expressed in the Kuṟuṉtokai also about the cold northern winds.[39] In works like Neṭunalvāṭai, too, we find references to this uncomfortable wind.

An instance in Kuṟuṉtokai where the lady declares that her love is larger than earth, higher than the skies, and deeper than the waters of the sea, is well known to all.[40] An identical expression is found in Tiruvāymoḻi under a similar contexr.

"Maṉtiṉi ñālamum ēḻkaṭalum ṉīḻvicumpum
Kaḻiyap peritāl" (7-3-8).

The verses seem to be rather mutually interpretative.

The oncoming dusk sends the lady into a pining mood. The thought of her husband away from her begins to torment her. This sullenness in solitude is made apparent in Tiruvāymoḻi hymn: "Mallikai kamaḻ tenṟal" (9-9). Many scenes of the dusk are portraved there. The cows returning home after pasture, remembering their calves make the lady sad at the thought of her lover away somewhere at the moment.

"āpuku mālaiyum ākinṟālō
Yāmuṭai yāyantan manam kallālā" (9-9-5)

In Kuruntokai[41] the scene is so pitifully described that it evokes the desolate mood effectively. "The Āḻvār, passionately craving for union with the Lord pitiously crys out to Him. He does not come. Yet he does not hate him, since the love that he hears to the Lord is deep and true. He still pleads: ',O Lord! thou art loathe to come, but thy lotus-feet are ornament to my head" (4-3-6). This intimates to us that though the Lord forgot the lady, she is not able to forget him. The Kuṟuntokai puts it briefly:

"Maṟantōr manṟa; maṟavām nāmē"[42]

## *Kalittokai*

We can find parallels in this work to Tiruvāymoḻi in three instances. One is a delightful simile, the second is a concept on the nature of love, and the third is the description of Tirumāl. who is reclining on the serpent bed constantly preoccupied with the thought of protecting the world. Tiruvāymoḻi puts it :

"Aintu paintalai āṭu aravaṇaimēvip pāṟkaṭal
yōka nittiraicintai ceyta entāy" (2-6-5).

The Kalittokai puts it: "Pāṭimiḻ parappakattu aravaṇai acaiiya āṭukoḷ nēmiyaṉ."[43]

"To pass a lance into a bleeding wound" is a conventional expression used for describing the increase in sufferings mounted one on another. This conventional adage finds expression in both Tiruvāymoḻi and Kalittokai. The bees humming sweetly only deepens the pangs of the lady who is already sick with love. She exclaims sadly that the bees are piercing the open wound with a sharp lance as it were.[44]

In the Āḻvār's hymns, the lady sends a message to the Lord that she is also one of those to be protected by him. This does not mean that she wants to tell him that she is alive. That is not necessary because He knows it. The tradition in Tamil literature – as Rāmānuja himself tells us – is that if one of the lovers is alive, the other also is taken to be alive. Therefore, the lady wants it to be understood by the Lord that she is also one of those who expect protection and consideration from Him. Kalittokai also conveys the sentiment of love. The lady consoles herself that after all that her lover is alive and that no harm has occurred to him. How did she come to know this? It is simple. When she is alive, her beloved also must be alive. Otherwise, if anything had happened to him, she would not be alive.

"ēṟucēvakanārkku ennaiyum Uḷaḷ enminkaḷē(6-1-10)
"Innuyir annārku enaittonṟum tītinmai
ennuyir kāṭṭātō maṟṟu"[45] (kalittokai)

The same idea is found in Ciṉtāmaṇi also. There the hero speaks in the same strain[46].

## *Tirukkuṟaḷ*

Tirukkuṟaḷ is the common scripture of the people of Tamil Nāṭu. It had become long since, the tradition in

Tamil literature to quote and even adopt words and ideas from this great classic.

(a) *The Nature of God*: In the invocatory section of Tirukkuṟaḷ, the lord is referred to in the most general terms. The names given to the Lord there are indicative of His nature. The necessity for worshipping the Lord and the fruits thereof are briefly yet very effectively brought out by Vaḷḷuvar.

This aspect is found in the Āḻvār's hymns also. In Tiruvāymoḻi the Āḻvār describes the Lord as :

"Ātiyam Pakavan (1-3-5)". Vaḷḷuvar calls the Lord as "Ātipakavan"[47]. That the Lord is the prius of the world and its basis is brought out in both these expressions. The Āḻvār says "Muḻu mūvula kātikkellām mutal tani" (10-10-9). Terms like "Iṟaivan, aṟavāḻi aṉtaṇan" are used to describe God in the Kuṟaḷ. Āḻvār uses the terms iṟai, and Iṟaiyōn[48] and as if explaining the latter term, he says "Aṟavanai āḻippaṭai aṉtaṉanai" (1-7-1).

Expressions like "Vālaṟivan", are not used as such but words which mean the same thing are used by the Āḻvār in many places. The sense of the phrase "Malarmicai ēkinān" used in Kuṟaḷ is conveyed more or less by the phrase used by the Āḻvār: "Taṇtāmarai cumakkum pātapperumān" (4-5-8). The word in Tirukkuṟaḷ is in the past tense. No such word is present in the Tiruvāymoḻi. Now we shall proceed to show some more identical expressions with regard to the nature of God in these great works.

"Vēṇṭuṭal vēṇṭāmai ilān" (Kuṟaḷ-4)
"Koḷkai Koḷāmai ilātān" (Tiru 1-6-5)
"Tanakkuvamai illātān" (Kuṟaḷ-7)
"inan ilan" (Tiru 1-1-2)
"īṭum eṭuppumil īcan" (Tiru 1-6-3).

The expressions: "eṇkuṇattaṉ" and "poṟivāyil aiṉtavittāṉ" do not occur as such in Tiruvāymoḻi. However, that the term "Irutikēcan" (2-7-9) means one who has conquered his senses is found.

Other designations of the Lord in the Kuṟaḷ are: "Teyvam", (50,55), "aṭiyaḷaṉtāṉ" (610), Tāmaraikkaṇṇāṉ" (1103) etc. Of these, the latter two refer to Viṣṇu. The great deed of measuring the universe with His feet is glorified by the Āḻvār in several places. The expressions used are:

"Ulakamaḷaṉta aṭiyānai" (9-4-10)
"Tāmaraikaṇṇan" (2-2-5 and 2-6-2)
"Teyvam" (5-2-7).

b) *The Reward*: "The end of true education is to worship the feet of the Lord", says Kuṟaḷ (2). The Āḻvār agrees when he says: "Kaṟkum Kalviyin Cāram Kṇṇan" (5-6-2) and

'Kalvi yellām Kaṇṇapirānē' (6-5-4).

The essense of all education is none but God. All learning should be God oriented. The fulfilment of life can be found according to the Āḻvār only in constantly worshipping the Lord (3-5-6). Those who have realised the Lord in their hearts have attained everything that there is to be obtained. Their life is complete, and whole. To train oneself in this art of God-realisation and life-fulfilment is true education. He asks: "Is there a learning worth its name except the one which imparts education on Srī Rāma (7-5-1)"?. "Would one born in this country desire anything but to be in the service of the Lord?" (7-5-2). This clearly establishes the fact that according to the Āḻvār, the true end of education is realized only in the service of the Lord. That is the most successful life. Our lives are

intended for this purpose only. So our education must train us in that kind of life of service unto the Lord. All this seems to be a commentary on the kuṟaḷ :

"Kaṟṟatanāl āya payanenkol?" (Kuṟaḷ–2).

Vaḷḷuvar assures us that for those who reach the Lord's feet, there could be no pain and misery. The Āḻvār sings in an identical strain.

"Kaṇṇanait tāḷpaṟṟi yān enṟum kēṭilanē" (3–10–10).

"Avan tiṟattup paṭṭa pinnai iṟaiyākilum yān enmanattup parivilēne" (3–10–3)

Kuṟaḷ has this phrase: "Tāḷai vaṇaṅkāttalai" (Kuṟal 9)

The Āḻvār urges: "Tāḷkaḷ Talaiyil Vaṇaṅki
ṉāḷ kaṭalaikkaḷimin" (1–6–7).

Kuṟaḷ is emphatic that the results of the twofold Karma will not touch the servants of the Lord.

"iruvinaiyum cērā" (Kuṟaḷ.5) – The Āḻvār has this :
"Irumai vinai kaṭivār" (1–6–9).

The term 'Iruḷ "(darkness) is also added by him as in the Kuṟaḷ to each of the Karmās. "Vinaivalliruḷ" (10–5–10); The servants and devotees of the Lord will go beyond birth and death, says the Kuṟaḷ".[49] In the Āḻvār's songs we find "Puṇaivan piṟavikkaṭal ṉiṉtuvārkkē" (2–8–1).

(c) *The Theme of Divine Love* ; Nammāḻvār had no time to think of anything else than the Lord (6–7–1). Everything, every act was a reminder of the Lord; nay, was an expression of the Lord. Neither Vaḷḷuvar nor Nammāḻvār had any derogatory attitude towards the womanhood. On the contrary, Nammāḻvār imagined himseif as a love-sick woman pining for the Lord and his bridal mysticism is in the best tradition of Tamil culture.

No wonder then that the ideas and phrases of the section on love in Tirukkuṟaḷ are found in a large measure

in Tiruvāymoli. In fact, one kuṟaḷ verse, "Ūravar kavvai eruvāka annaicol nīrāka niḷumin nōy" (1147) has been bodily adopted in the Tiruvāymoli. In this Kuṟaḷ verse, the slander and gossip of the folk in the village are described as the stimulant to the growth of love in the lady and the repeated censures of her mother help only to nourish her consuming passion for the Lord. In a hymn in the Tiruvāymoli, where Nammāḻvār becomes the spouse of the Lord and in an unquenchable thirst for the Lord, decides to come in procession in the streets in public expression of her love (maṭaleṟutal), the afore said verse from kuṟaḷ is actually incorporated. The Kuṟaḷ has only two lines and is very crisp but the Āḻvār expresses the same idea and builds on it in four lines. The imagery is that of a sappling born of the seed of love in the field of the heart, watered by the mother's censure and nourished by the public gossip. The progenitor of that love is the Lord who resembles the dark clouds. Hence the growth of the plants is sumptuously dense and full like the sea. What a beautiful imagery!.

'Ūravar kavvai...............kaṭiyanē' (5-3-4).

The spouse is, according to the Kuṟaḷ, pining in separation. She is yearning for at least a word to soften the pain of love from her Lord, who has no consideration for her.[50] The Āḻvār cries; "O Lord! even if you do not deign to come in response to my entreaties in tears, you can at least come and tell me" "O sinner! you are not fit for my love" (4-7-3). Even to declare this, the Lord has to come. Then he can have a vision of the Lord: What a strategem: We can discern a perfect similarity of theme and thought in the Kuṟaḷ and Tiruvāymoli here.

As the evening falls, the lady feels the pinch of separation from her lover. To the maid, she opens her heart saying that the same dusk was the harbinger of pleasant ecstacies

when her Lord was by her side. Now it appears to be the executioner approaching to take her life[51]. When the melodies produced by some shepherd on the flute fall on her ears, it makes her realise the approach of the dusk, which scorches her like fire and the music torments her like murderous weapons[52]. These are two separate ideas in the Kuṟaḷ.

The Āḻvār combines these two ideas in one song: "*Yāmuṭai ṉeñcamum tuṇaiyanṟālō!* āpuku *mālaiyum* ākinṟālō! yāmuṭai āyantan manam kallālō! avanuṭait *tiṅkuḻal irumālō!*[53]"
(9-9-5)

Vaḷḷuvar describes the condition of a lady confiding to her trusted friend that the "sweet nothings" that her willy Lord whisphered into her ears took away all the restraints and resistance from her.

"panmāyak kaḷvan paṇimoḻi yanrōṉam peṇmai uṭaikkum paṭai" (Kuṟaḷ - 1258).

The Āḻvār has a similar line with almost identical expression :

'Ṉinceṅkani vāyin kaḷvap paṇimoḻi ṉinaitoṟum āvi vēmāl' (10-3-4)

In another Kuṟal, the lady in love chides her heart for going after her Lord leaving her. Is it the very nature of hearts to do so? or does it believe that with the deserted people, there could be no friendship[54]? The Āḻvār also makes the lady-love exclaim :

'Yāmuṭai........' (Tiru 9-9-5) and 'Ṉam kaṇṇan kaḷvam kavarṉta attani neñcam avan kaṇahtē' (9-9-7).

In the Kuṟal, the lover complains that he also once had all the qualities of modesty, robust manhood and bravery.

But now he has lost them comes in procession publicly to announce his love-lorn heart. This is what he tells the lady he loves[55]. The Āḻvār also speaks of himself as a lady in love with the Lord and aggressively undertakes to express it by the *maṭalūrtal*, thereby throwing to the winds all the modesty of a woman (5-3-9).

The relationship between the soul and God, is, according to Vaiṣṇava Siddhānta, the one that obtains between the body and the soul. The Āḻvār holds the same view; 'Uṭanmicai Uyir enak karanteṅkum paraṉtuḷan' (1-1-7). In Vaḷḷuvar's words, the bond between the lady and her lover is described as similar to the inseparable relation between the body and life[56].

Lastly, we shall now witness the spectacle of one whole Kuṟaḷ being incorporated in the *Tiruvāymoḻi*. The lover breaks into ecstatic praise of his experiences in the company of his beloved, of how he experienced at once all the joys that could be had only at different times and from different objects.

'Kaṇṭu kēṭṭu uṇtu Uyirttu Uṟṟu aṟiyum aimpulanum
Oṇ toṭi kaṇṇē yuḷa' (K 1101).

The Āḻvār adopts this Kuṟaḷ

'Kaṇṭu Kēṭṭu Uṟṟu mōṉtu Uṇṭu uḻalum aiṅkaruvi
kaṇṭa inpam:' (4-9-10)

Only the Āḻvār does not praise this pleasure. Rather he tells us that he preferred the Lord's feet to sensuality. Yet, the verbal expression is similar. In another place also the Āḻvār uses the same words in a slightly different order :

'Palapala kaṇṭu Uṇṭu Kēṭṭu Uṟṟu mōṉtu inpam'
(2-5-6)

This is so far as the love theme is concerned.

(d) *Wealth and Virtue*: Now, certain similarities could be looked into with reference to Aṟam–virtue and poruḷ – wealth. Wealth has always been a great power with those who possess it in abundance. Homage is showered on the wealthy barons. The poor and the needy invariably go to the walls. They receive nothing but redicule and degradation. Vaḷḷuvar says:

> 'illārai ellārum eḷḷuvar celvarai
> ellārum ceyyar ciṟappu' (Kuṟaḷ – 752)

The Āḻvār totally agrees:

> 'Poruḷ kai Uṇṭāyc cellak kāṇil pōṟṟiyen rēṟṟeḻuvar
> Iruḷkoḷ tunpat tinmai kāṇil ennenpārumillai, (9-1-3)

But the purpose of the two great men is different. Vaḷḷuvar wants to impress on people the need for accumulating wealth, The Āḻvār lashes at the pettiness of people who can be purchased by money.

Of all the gifts of life, the greatest is easily the good will of the wise elders. This is Vaḷḷuvar's idea.[57] The Āḻvār makes the Lord the tallest of all wise elders and the greatest of gifts in life which he himself has enjoyed.

> 'periyārkkāṭ paṭṭakkāl peṟāta payan peṟumāṟu' (10–10)

It is because the Āḻvār placed himself comfortably in the hands of Lord, His grace flowed through the Āḻvār and made him sing on God.

The King who rules in accordance with the principles of justice and fair play and equity is esteemed by the people to be God himself.[58] The Āḻvār accepts this idea of Vaḷḷuvar when he makes the mother of the lady in love with Lord say of her condition:

> 'Tiruvuṭai mannaraikkāṇin Tirumālaik kaṇṭēnē'
> (4-4-8).

While speaking about a nation Tiruvaḷḷuvar says "that is the great country which is free from famines and plagues and which is safe from invasions of foes" (734) (V. V. S. Ayyar). The Āḻvār expresses that the duty of the devotees of the Lord is to eradicate the following evils from the land altogether. They are disease, enmity and poverty or hunger and such other evils (5-2-6). It is evident that the requirements of a nation or land are the same for both the Āḻvār and Tiruvaḷḷuvar.

A lady who passionately pines in solitude for the Lord sends birds as messenger to her Lord apprising him of her distraught condition. The Lord is in Heaven. If the bird succeeds in effectivelly conveying the message and inducing the Lord not to be apethetic any longer, the lady promises the bird the sovereignity of both the other world and this. The first boon is the sovereignty of the heavens. This is because the lady feels the heavens to be a nearer home as her Lord dwells there (6-8-1). Vaḷḷuvar puts it:

'Aiyattin ṉīṅkit teḷiṉtārkku vaiyattin
vāṉa naṇiya tuṭaittu' (353).

The primary meaning is that for those who have crossed to the other shores of truth, the great house of liberation is nearer than the temporal world of ignorance.

The Āḻvār constructs into his Tiruvāymoḻi the substance of two Kuṟaḷ couplets regarding renunciation. Āḻvār says:

'Aṟṟatu paṟṟenil uṟṟatu vīṭuyir
ceṟṟatu mannuṟil aṟṟu iṟai paṟṟe' (1-2-5).

The necessity to give up the notions of 'I' and 'Mine' cannot be emphasised too much, declares the Āḻvār, in the pilgrim's journey to God (1-2-3). Vaḷḷuvar says:

'Yāṉenatu ennum cerukku aṟuppāṉ Vāṉōrkku
uyarṉta ulakam pukum' (K. 348) - meaning

"'He who severs the pride of 'I' and 'mine' will enter a world beyond that of the Gods."

Again, the Tiruvāymoḻi asking us to give up everything in 'viṭumin muṟṟavum' etc. (1-2-1) has got its parallel in the Kuṟaḷ -

'Viṭal vēṇṭum vēṇṭiya vellām oruṅku' (K. 343)

(e) *Householder's Life* : The prattle of once own children sends the parent into rapture. Only those who are not privileged to hear the tender articulations of their own babies will praise the music of the flute and the harp as melodious.[59] The Āḻvār was a bachelor and had no privilege of this kind. But he sings on the richness of Tiruvallavāḻ that the bees in the bush garden of that place hum melodies reminding one of the flute and the harp.

'Kuḻalenna yāḻumennak kuḻircōlaiyiḻ tēnaruṉti
maḻalaivari vaṇṭukaḷ icaipāṭum Tiruvallavāḻ' (5-9-9)

We can see identity of words used in the works of Vaḷḷuvar and the Āḻvār.

Vaḷḷuvar declares that evil will not strike, for seven births one of whose progeny has spotless character.[60] The same result has accrued to him and to his kith and kin says the Āḻvār, because of the grace of the Lord (2-7-1). The good either in the form of the virtuous conduct or in the form of devotion to the Lord will never fail to yield its results in his own time. It raises not only the good and the trusted, but it raises the ancestory also for many births (2-6-7). This is what both the Āḻvār and Tiruvaḷḷuvar tell us.

When describing the nature of a chaste woman, Vaḷḷuvar states that she would give greater preference to bowing before her husband, than to the worship of God[61].

Similarly when the Āḻvār speaks about the lady who has chosen the Lord Himself as her spouse, says :

"Unnittu maṟṟoru teyvam toḻāḷ avanai yallāl"
(4-6-10).

It is not hard to see the identity of views here.

*Cilappatikāram*

In the first Tamiḻ Kāvya, Cilappatikāram, we get a fund of information beautifully narrated on Māyōn in the portions of Āycciyar *Kuravai* and other places. The glory of Nārāyaṇa has been eulogised as

'Nārāyaṇā ennā ṉā enna ṉāvē' (17-37
'Kariyavanaik kāṇāta kaṇṇenna kaṇṇē' (17-36)

'Tirumāl cīrkēḷāta cevienna ceviyē' (17-35)

The Āḻvār's lines happen to be on the *same model* as the above is evident in the following :

'Kaṟpār irāmapirānai yallāl maṟṟum kaṟparō' (7-5-1)
'Nāṭṭil piṟantavar Nāraṇaṟk kāḷanṟi avarō' (7-5-2)
'Kēṭpārkaḷ Kēcavan kīrtiyallāl maṟṟum kēṭparō'
(7-5-3)

In the lines of the *Kānalvari*, where the heroine opens her mind and tells us that it is impossible for her to forget her lover though he has forgotten her, the following lines occur :

'Nammai maṟantārai ṉāmmaṟakka māṭṭēmāl'[62]

Almost in an identical idiom, the Āḻvār's lines have been shaped. He cries in pangs of separation that though the Lord has not deigned to come inspite of his repeated entreaties, His feet are still the adornment of his head' (4-3-6). The expression 'enkō' is also employed both in Cilappatikāram and Tiruvāymoḻi[63].

*Tirumantiram*

Again, certain parallels are noticeable between Tirumaṉtiram and Tiruvāymoḻi. Both Tirumūlar and the Āḻvār are foresighted seers. Their paths are different. Yet, there are striking parallels between them. The similarity in phrasiology provokes one's thought. In the history of Saivism, perhaps, the first philosophical poem is Tirumaṉtiram. Tiruvāymoḻi is the most important philosophical work for Vaiṣṇavism in Tamil. Perhaps, this is the reason why certain similarities were inivitables. In both the works, philosophy, hymns of praise and instruction in the mysteries are found in abundance.

In the Pāyiram at the commencement of Tirumaṉtiram are found three references which are parallel to what we find in the activities of Nammāḻvār. We have already noticed that the Āḻvār was an inspired saint, rendered the Vedic truths into Tamiḻ, preached to the world out of boundless compassion and call his own hymns as 'oṇtamiḻkaḷ'.

Similarly, Tirumūlar says that he was the recipient of God's grace,[64] that God Siva Himself was his polestar[65] and guide and that his mission was to render the vedic and agamic truths in Tamil.[66] That he began to preach to the world out of sheer compassion is evident from his words,

'Yān peṟṟa inpam peṟuka ivvaiyakam' (L. 85)

This is the reason why he instructs mankind by his innumerable words of wisdom. Just as the Āḻvār says that the Lord has sung about Himself through him,[67] Tirumūlar says that the very purpose of his being sent into the world by God is to sing His praises in Tamiḻ.[68]

Tirumūlar wonders whether anyone could measure or comprehend the glory of Siva.[69] Likewise the Āḻvār asks

whether it is possible to any one to fully know the greatness of Nārāyaṇa (8-3-9).

Now we shall notice the expressions in the later part of Tirumaṉtiram and their likeness to Āḻvār's hymns.

1) 'Āṇallan peṇṇallan allā aliyu mallan'-This is Āḻvār (2-5-10)

'Peṇṇalla āṇalla pēṭumalla'-This is Tirumūlar (V. 1872)

2) 'MeyyanāKum virumpit toḻuvārkkellām
'Poyyanākum puṟamē toḻuvārkkellām' - The Āḻvār (9-10-7)

'Mey kalaṉtāroṭu meykalaṉtān mikap
Poy kalaṉtaruṭ pukutāp punitan' (Tirumūlar - 2601)

3) 'Illanumallan uḷanallan emmiṟai (Tirumūlar - 3015)
Uḷanallan Illaiyallan' (The Āḻvār - 2-5-10).

(a) (Bhakti):

'Aṭiyār aṭiyār aṭiyārk kaṭimaik
Kaṭiyanāy ṉalkiṭ ṭaṭimaiyum pūṇṭēn' (Tirumūlar-2624)
'Aṭiyār aṭiyār tammaṭiyār tamak
kaṭiyār aṭiyārtam aṭiyār aṭiyōṅkaḷē' (Āḻvār 3-7-10).

The Āḻvār sings in ecstasy over the fact that God has entered him:

'Muṭiyātaten enakkēl ini? Muḻuvēḻulakamum
uṇṭān ukaṉtu vaṉtu
Aṭyēnuḷ pukuṉtān akalvānu mallan'
(The Āḻvār 2-6-7).

An echo of this is found in Tirumūlar:

'Ārālum ennai amaṭṭa voṇṇātinic
Cirārpirān vaṉtu enciṉtai pukuṉtān' (Tirumūlar-2960).

When describing how the Lord came to possess him the Āḻvār says: communicating the idea that no sooner he

uttered the mountainous abode of the Lord He came and fill his being.

'Tirumālirum cōlai malai en̲r̲ēn, ennat
Tirumāl van̲tu enneñcu niṟaiyap pukun̲tān̲' (10-8-1)

Tirumūlar says that it is not the utterance of the name of the mountainous abode, but His name Siva, made Him appear before him.

'Civaperumā nenṟu n̲ānaḻait tēttat
tavaperumā nenṟu tānvantu n̲inṟān̲' (Tirumūlar 2971).

The Lord drew him unto himself as the hot iron draws water unto itself, says Tirumūlar.[70] The same imagery is employed by the Āḻvār too.

"Tīra irumpuṇṭa n̲īratupōla ennāruyirai
ā rap paruka enakkārā vamutānāy" (Āḻvār 10-10-5).

Is it not a matter of surprise and joy that both these great sons of God should choose the same imagery? Mutual borrowing being too unsound an idea to be entertained, it might be that both had drawn their figures of speech and expressions from a common source.

(b) *Teachings*: All religions and their literature persuade mankind to grow dispassionate. Tirumūlar says: 'paṟṟatu paṟṟiṟ paramanaip paṟṟumin' (Tirumūlar: 298). Āḻvār is equally emphatic in declaring that dispassion alone will yield the highest beatitude (1-2-5). In the last phase of Tiruvāymoḻi, the Āḻvār says:

'Periyārk kāṭpaṭṭakkāl peṟātapayan peṟumāṟu' etc. (10-6-10), denoting that the Lord at Vāṭṭāṟu had showed him how the service to the great saints and seers and devotees of God will get extraordinary benefits. Tirumūlar too says:

"Periyāruṭan kūṭal pērinpa māme" (545)

These are some important and major similarities. If we look into the works still more closely then we may discover more such parallels in thoughts and ideas also. No attempt is made here to collate them.

*Tēvāram-Appar*

We shall henceforth see certain comparable elements in Appar (7th Century) and the Āḻvār. It is possible to say that in the Appar's Tēvāram, there is little of philosophical expression. But there is a plenitude of devotional hymns, teachings and lovely songs of bridal love towards the Lord.

(a) *Nature of God:* Appar sings variously of God and His nature:

"Mēlārkaḷ mēlārkaṉ mēlār tāmē" (p. 383)
"Periyārkaṭ kellām periyāy ṉīye" (p. 387)
"Tēvarkkum tēvanāy ṉinṟāy pōṟṟi" (p. 419)

The Āḻvār sings the same way: "Manicarkkut tēvarpōlat tēvarkkum tēvāvō" (8-1-5).

Again - "Meyyanait tanpakkal virumpuvārkku, virumpāta arumpāviyar kaṭku enṟum poyyanai" is Appar (p. 440)

"Meyyanākum virumpittoḻuvārkkellām
Poyyanākum puṟamē toḻuvārkkellām" This is Āḻvār (9-10-7)

The Āḻvār describes the Lord in terms of merits and demerits (6-3-4) as Appar too does in: 'Ṉalvinaiyum tīvinaiyumānān."[71] Both had that the Lord is neither male nor female nor neuter.[72] Both address the Lord in the first person and in the third person. To both, there is no equal to God.[73] Both are certain that the Lord dwells, both in their hearts and in the holy shrines.

"Kaṇṇināl kaḻal kāṇpiṭa mētenil
puṇṇiya pukalūru mennēñcumē" (Appar. p. 234)

"Tirukkaṭit tānamum ennuṭaic ciṉfaiyum
Oruk kaṭuttu uḷḷē uṟaiyum pirānkaṇṭīr"
(Āḻvār 8-6-2).

Both are agreed that the Lord is easy to the devotees but not to others.

"Kāṭci piṟarkkelām aṟiyar; Toṇṭarkkeḷiyar"
(Appar. p. 206).

"Pattuṭai aṭiyavark keḷiyavan piṟarkaḷukkariya
vittakan" (Āḻvār 1-3-1).

Both remember the Lord as sweet as the ambrosia, as "ārāvamutu"[74]

(b) *The Nature of Devotees*: Both the Āḻvār and Appar realize their infinite smallness before the Lord. Their humility is striking and touching.

"Ṉīcanēn ṉiṟaivonṟu milēn" (The Āḻvār 3-3-4)

"Ṉiṟaivilēn Ṉēcamilēn Ṉinaivilēn" (Appar. p. 117

"Ṉīcanēn' (Appar. p. 403)

(c) *The Nature of Worship*: Appar sees before his eyes all the denizens of heaven assemble with flowers in their palms to offer worahip to the Lord.[75]

The Āḻvār describes the scene of Tiruvēṅkaṭam being propitiated by the celestial beings with their chiefs with flowers' water, lamps, incense etc. (3-3-7). His heart yearns to gather flowers from all the eight directions of the world to be offered in invoking (4-7-8). From these accounts it is clear that flowers had an indispensable place among the auxiliaries of worship either by the celestial beings or by the mortals.

Even in the matter of the bestowal of grace, there is a unison in these poets: 'ā ā ven ṟaruḷpuriyum aiyāṟanē enṟenṟanē enṟenṟē ṉānaraṟṟi naikinṟēn' – (Appar. p. 384). 'ā ā ven ṟaruḷ ceytu aṭiyēnoṭum ānānē' (The Āḻvār 5-1-9) There has been apparently a tradition to invoke the Lord's sympath and bestowal of grace as "'ā ā venṟu enakkrauḷi'' (1-4-1) and "enṟu ṉaivan atiyēnē" (1-5-6).

(d) *Teachings*: Even in the matter of teachings, it is not only the ideas but also the expressions that are found to be identical. For instance:

"*Toṇṭarākit* toḻutu *paṇiminō*
*Paṇṭai valvinai paṟṟaṟa vēṇṭuvīr*" (Appar – p. 199)

"Pāṭu cāravinai; *Paṟṟaṟa vēṇṭuvīr*
.............................................
Pāṭiyāṭip *paṇimin* avan tāṭkaḷē" (The Āḻvār 9-10-11).

"*Paṇṭai vinaiyāyina* paṟṟō ṭaṟuttu
*Toṇṭark* kamutuṇṇac conmālaikaḷ connēn"
(The Āḻvār 9-4-9).

To adorn the Lord with a garland of songs is also one of the accepted models of worship and homage. Both Appar and the Āḻvār bring home the truth that only by worshipping and doing service to the Lord, the attachments and immemorial bonds to our deeds could be destroyed once for all.

(e) *Poetry with the Theme of Divine Love*: The mother tells the confidants of her own daughter about the love-lorn condition of her daughter, who pines for the Lord. In this context the lines from Appar and the Āḻvār are quite similar. For instance:

"Naṅkaimīr itaṟken ceykēn ṉāḷumē" (Appar p. 294)

"Ṉān itaṟkenceykēn Ṉaṅkaimīr" (The Āḻvār 4-2-8)

*Tēvāram :- Suntarar*

Suntarar might have been the contemporary of the Āḻvār or might have lived a little later [76]. The hymns of Suntarar are about one thousand, collected and canonised as the seventh Tirumurai. Perphaps because Suntarar and the Āḻvār lived in the same age, there is a good deal of similarity in the hymnal expression of these great poet-saints. Love-theme is found in Suntarar's Tēvāram though not in abundance. There is nature description. He employs different kinds of rhythm. At the end of each hymn in Suntarar Tēvāram a verse declares the good that accrues to one who reads or recites that hymn. A special characteristic of Suntarar's verses is his sense of humour.

(a) Nature of God : When singing on the Lord Suntarar says :

Cūḻoḻi nīr nilam tīt tāḻvaḷi ākācam
Vānuyir Veṅkatirōn Vaṇṭamiḻ Vallavarkaḷ
Ēḻicai ēḻnarampin ōcaiyai''–Suntarar (p. 216)

The Āḻvār has it as :

Nīrāy Nilanāy tīyāy kālāy neṭuvānāy
Cīrār cuṭarkaḷ iraṇṭāy civanāy ayanānāy'' (6-9-1)
'Munnal yāḻpayil nūlnarampin mutircuvaiyē' (2-3-7)

Are not these two ideas the same? The words of address also are the same. For instance :

'Tēnē innamutē ......... Suntarar (p. 174)
'Tēnē innamutē enrenrē – Āḻvār (5-1-2)

Suntarar in one place avers that even the most insincere eulogies by the devotees are received as true by the Lord out of boundless grace and the devotees are blessed.

'Poyyē unnaip pukaḻvār pukaḻntāl atuvum
Poruḷāk koḷvaṇē' – Suntarar (p. 172).

Even when speaking about his own condition he addresses the Lord as :

'Poyyē ceytu puṟam puṟamē tirivēn tannaip pōkāmē
Meyyē vantiṅ kenaiyāṇṭa meyyā–Suṉtarar (p. 209).

These ideas are found in the Āḻvārs songs in the same manner with the same intent. For instance :

'poyyē kaimaicollip puṟamē puṟamē yāṭi
meyyē peṟṟoliṉtēn' The Āḻvār (5–1–1)

(b) Mode of Worship : When Suṉtarar sings of the Lord at Ārūr he speaks of the circumambulation of the temple, offering flowers unto His feet both in the morning and in the evening[77]. The Āḻvār too refers to this method[78]. Suṉtarar sings of binding the Lord in his heart with a garland of hymns.

"Vākkennum mālaikoṇṭu Unnai enmanattu ārkkinṟēn'
Suṉtarar (p.231)

The Āḻvār says :

"Nān Vācakamālai koṇṭu ettanaikālam
pulampuvēn" – Āḻvār (3–8–10)

"Collāl icaimālaikaḷ ētti Uḷḷappeṟṟēn" (4–5–6)

It is not difficult to see that the ideas are similar.

(c) Nature of the Soul : Suṉtarar confesses his short comings before the Lord at Iṭaimarutu. He never gives alms ; anger and lust, hatred and jealousy have not been brought under control.

"Koṭukka killēn oṉporuḷ tannai kuṟṟam ceṟṟam
ivaimutalāka viṭukkakiṟṟilēn vētkaiyum vēṇṭ il
aimpulan envacamalla – Suṉtara" (p. 65).

The Āḻvār briefly puts it

'iṭakilēn onṟu aṭṭakillēn aimpulan vellakillēn' (4-7-9).

In another context, Suṉtarar speaks of renouncing the life of the householder :

'Veṟuttēn manai vāḻkaiyai viṭṭoḻiṉtēn' – Suṉtarar (p. 301)

The Āḻvār too has this idea of renunciation :

'Maṭittēn manai vāḻkaiyil niṟpatōr māyaiyai'
Āḻvār (10-8-3)

Both of them declare their dislike for birth or life on earth.

'Māniṭappiṟavi vāḻvatōr vāḻvu vēṇṭēn' – Ārūrar (p.277)
'Iruḷtaru mā ñālattuḷ inippiṟavi yān vēṇṭen' – Āḻvār (10-6-1).

Ārūrar desires to be a servant of the devotees of God.

'Attā ālaṅkāṭā unnaṭiyārkku aṭiyēn āvēnē' – (p. 209)

In some other context he expresses that the servants of God are his masters.

'Ānaikkāvuṭai ātiyai nāḷum
Iṟaivan enṟaṭi cērvār emmaiyum āḷuṭaiyārē' (p. 81)

The Āḻvār also expresses the same sentiments in the following lines:

'Āḻippirān tannaip paṇiyumavar kaṇṭīr nāḷum
piṟappiṭaitōṟum emmai yāḷuṭai nātarē' – (3-7-2)
'Ponnāḻikkai ennammān nīkkamillā aṭiyārtam
aṭiyār aṭiyār aṭiyār eṅkōkkaḷ' (8-10-10)

In the later reference we find the Āḻvār expressing that God's servants and their servants to the extent of 4 or 5 layers would be his masters. Perhaps he wants to go to the farthest limit possible which shows his intensity of devotion.

(d) Relation to God: Suṉtarar compares the union and absorption of the soul in God, to the water being absorbed by the red hot iron.

'ētilan manattukku ōrirum puṇṭa ṉīrai' - Suṉt (p. 20)

The Āḻvār has it thus:

'Tiru irumpuṇṭa nīratupōla' - (10-10-5)

(e) Declaration of Benefits: Suṉtarar promises the sovereignty of heaven for those who are privileged to learn and recite his hymns.

'Ārūran uraitta Tamiḻ vaḻuvā mālai vallār
vānulakāḷ pavarē' - Suṉ (p. 165).

The Āḻvār declares the same great fruit, and, in addition the bliss of being the servants of the Lord.

'Collār tamiḻ āyirattuḷ ivaipattum
vallār toṇṭar āḻvatu cūḻponvicumpē' - Āḻvār
(10-8-11).

(f) Teachings: Addressing his own heart, Suṉtarar drives home the impermanance of things. Instead of running after the perishable things, it is infinitely better to go in search of the imperishable Almighty.

"Patiyum cuṟṟamum peṟṟamakkaḷum paṇṭaiyarallar
peṇṭirum
Ṉitiyil immanai vāḻumvāḻkaiyum ṉinaippoḻi
maṭaneñcamē" - Suṉt (p. 99).

The Āḻvār addressing people around him expresses the futility of love and passion of one's kith and kin, and exhorts them to love the Lord who is their only true refuge.

"Koṇṭapeṇṭir makkaḷ uṟṟār cuṟṟattavar piṟarum
Kaṇṭatōṭu paṭṭatallāl kātalmaṟṟu yātumillai" -
Āḻvār (9-1-1).

It is only Suṉtarar who like the Āḻvār exhorts the poets to desist from praising the dishonest men and to sing instead the glory of the Lord and His resorts. These two saint singers have devoted one full hymn for this exhortation.

What is the good of extolling the misers who never mean what they say? Su<u>n</u>tarar therefore asks the poets sing the Lord and Pukalūr where He dwells.

> "Tammaiyē pukaḻ<u>n</u>tu iccaipēcinum cārvinum toṇṭar
> tarukilāp, poymaiyāḷaraip pāṭātē e<u>n</u>tai pukalūr
> pāṭumin pulavīrkāḷ". – Su<u>n</u>tarar (p. 45)

The Āḷvār warns the poets against wasting their talents in the praising of the idle rich in hyperboles for a mess of pottage. To indulge in poetic exaggerations and to the charity of the wealthy class knowing that all that is untrue is to commit an offence against truthfulness for which poets as a class are famed (3-9-5). It is their task to sing in ecstasy on the Lord who is eternal and who bestows His grace unstintingly on his truthful devotees. That will ensure well being both in this world and in the other world, say both the Āḷvār and Su<u>n</u>tarar. While Su<u>n</u>tarar promises food and shelter for all the devotees for their trust in God, the Āḷvār says that they will get everything they desire, though he will ask them to toil and eke their livelihood (3-9-6). Su<u>n</u>tarar asks of the Lord at Nākaikkārōṇam golden flower and Vaṭṭikai, also a square meal three times a day.[79] To the Āḷvār, on the contrary, food, water and spiced betel, everything is the Lord only (6-7-1). This difference enables us to infer the ways of living of the two poet-saints.

(g) Description of the Land: Su<u>n</u>tarar goes to Kaliyanallūr and listens to the chorus of Vedic chants; the trumpets thundering at the time of festivals and the children playing noisily.[80] The Āḷvār's impression of Tiruppērai is the same.[81] The very expressions and their order and the number of points in them all are found identical.

(h) The Poetic Style: In the Panaṅkāṭṭūr hymn, Su<u>n</u>tarar dismisses every activity as useless other than

understanding God, speaking on Him, singing His praise, to mix with His devotees, to think constantly about Him, to serve Him.[82] The Āḻvār echoes this and says that the lives of people who do not dance in joy singing his glory are vain.[83]

In the Tiruvāmāttūr hymn, Suṉtarar has rhymed the words as. 'tēṭuvan tēṭuvan, nāṭuvan nāṭuvan, māṭuvan māṭuvan and āṭuvan āṭuvan.[84] The Āḻvār has got only one verse where a similar rhyming is found :

"Āṭi āṭi, pāṭippāṭi Nāṭi nāṭi and vāṭi vāṭum" (2-4-1)

We shall see now certain common usages in both, probably reflecting the age in which they lived.

| | Ārūrar | Āḻvār |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Aṭikaḷākiya aṭikaḷē (p. 133). | Aṭiyār tammaṭiyār emmaṭikaḷe (3-7-9) |
| 2. | Maṇṇulakum viṇṇulakum Ummatē āṭci (p. 247) | Ulakam mūnṟavai atci (8-1-1). |
| 3. | Kaṭṭanēn (p. 201) | Kaṭṭamē kātal (7-2-4). |
| 4. | Tīrttan (p. 244). | Tīrttan (2-8-6). |
| 5. | arccittār (p. 244) | arccikkinṟu (10-2-6) |
| 6. | He calls His verses 'Tamiḻ' (p.245) | paṉtalaiyil conna Tamiḻ āyiram (2-8-11). |

*Tiruvācakam*

Māṇikkavācakar is believed by many scholars to have lived in the ninth century of the Christian era,[85] a little later, than Nammāḻvār. His hymns melt the hearts of listeners; contain a good deal of philosophical concepts; and his unique characteristic is to base his songs on the little sports of the young girls. Some of his hymns are

in the form of Aṉtāti. The similarities between him and the Āḻvār consists mainly in singing the nature of the Lord and His ways of receiving the devotees unto Himself.

(a) Aṉtāti : In Tiruvācakam, the group of hymns called 'Tiruccatakam', 'Nīttalviṇṇappam' etc. consisting of an odd 210 songs are in the shape of Aṉtāti. But the Tiruvāymoḻi of the Āḻvār is entirely an Aṉtāti.

(b) Nature of God : Maṇivācaka addresses the Lord as 'Ārāvamutu' and says that the Lord has melted him as it were, and has entered him as his very life.[06] The Āḻvār has the same sentiment in the Kuṭaṉtai hymn, with the difference that he says that even his physical frame melts like water (5-8-1). Both speak of the Lord as True for the true, and false for the false, easy for the devoted and hard for the non-believers.

1. "Pakti valaiyiṟ paṭuvōn kāṇka" (Tiruvaṇṭappakuti-line 43)
   'Aḷavaṟuppataṟ kariyavan imaiyavarkku, aṭiyavark keḷiyān'[87]
   'Tannai yāvarum aṟivataṟ Kariyavan eḷiyavan aṭiyārkku'[88]
   'Pattuṭai aṭiyavark keḷiyavan piṟarkaḷuk kariya vittakan' Tiru (1-3-1).

2. 'Poyyartam Poyyanai meyyar meyyai'[89] (Tiruvācakam)
   'Meyyanākum virumpit toḻuvārkkellām
   Poyyanākum puṟamē toḻuvārkkellāmē' (Tiru. 9-10-7)

The similarities with reference to description of God's nature are :

3. 'Aruvamum uruvamum ānāy' (Pōṟṟittiruvakaval line 194)
   'Uruvum aruvum ṉīyē' (Tiru 7-8-10 and (5-10-6)

4. 'Pērāyiramuṭaip pemmān' (Pōṟṟittiruvakaval 200)
'Oru nāmam ōruruvam onṟu milārkku
Āyiram tiruṉāmam pāṭi' (Tirutteḷḷēṇam 1)
'Nāmaṅkaḷ āyiram uṭaiya Namperumān' (Tiru 5-9-11)
'Pērāyiram Koṇṭatōr pīṭuṭaiyan' (Tiru 9-3-1)

5. 'Ēḻulakum muḻutāḷi' (Kuyilpattu - 6)
'mūvuḷakāḷi' (Tiru 7-2-10) (8-9-5) and (9-9-9).

6. 'Pollāmaṇiyēyō' (Ācaippattu 1)
'Pollākkarumāṇikkamē' (Tiru 7-6-5) and (10-10-1).

7. 'Veḷiya ṉīṟāṭu mēni vētiyan' (Accappattu - 4)
'Veḷiya ṉīṟu ciṟitē yiṭum' (Tiru 4-5-6).

8. The Āḻvār marvels over the Lord manifesting Himself in objects of contrary nature. Māṇikkavācakar too, is overcome by this strange sport of the Lord.
"Meymaiyum poymaiyu māyināṟkku" etc.
(Tirupporcuṇṇam - 20) and Tiruvēcaṟavu 8).
The Āḻvār - Tiruvāymoḻi Decads (6-3) and (7-8).

(c) The nature of the Soul : Both feel utterly humble and unqualified to receive the grace of the Lord.

1. 'Nīcanēnai āṇṭāykku'[98] (Tiruccatakam 6-51)
'Nīcanēn' (Tiruvāy 3-3-4).

2. 'Cīlaminṟi ṉonpinṟic ceṟivēinṟi aṟivinṟi'[99]
'Cīlamillāc ciṟiyanelum' (Tiru 4-7-1)
'Nōṟṟa ṉōnpilēn ṉuṇṇaṟivilēn' (Tiru 5-7-1)

(d) The relation between God and the Soul and God's Reception of the Soul : 1. Both designate God as the prius of their lives.[91] 2. Maṇivācakar sings of the God as the : Toḻukulam (Tiruccatakam - 28). The Āḻvār addresses the devotees of the Lord as : 'Toḻukulam' (Tiru 3-7-8).

3. Tannait ta͟nta āramutai (Puṇarccippattu 1)
Enakkē tannait ta͟nta Kaṟpakam en amutam (Tiru 2-7-11).

4. Ūnāruṭal puku͟ntān uyir kala͟ntān uḷam piriyān[92] (Tiruvācakam)
enmuṭivu kāṇātē ennuḷ kala͟ntānē (Tiru 2–5–8).

5. Tēnaiyum pālaiyum kannalaiyum amutattaiyum ottu
Ūnaiyum enpinaiyum urukkāninṟa oṇmaiyanē[93]
Tēnum pālum kannalum amutumākit tittippa.[94]

6. Taḻalatu kaṇṭa meḻukatu pōla (Pōṟṟittiruvukaval 60, 61)
Erivāy meḻukokkum ͟ninṟe (Tiru 5–10–5).

7. Yet another comparison is with reference to the sea and the ship, though the two poet-saints make use of the simile in different ways. Maṇivācakar says that when he was submerged in the sea (of life) the life-boat called the Peru͟ntuṟai was sighted and when he was sailing in the boat, the Lord showed Himself in Kaḻukkunṟam to take him into Himself. He vexes eloquently emotional over the Lord appearing as the Saviour preceptor at Tirupperu͟ntuṟai.[95] But the Āḻvār employs the boat that is sinking in the sea. The Lord is described as saving him from going down with the sinking boat into the sea. The comparison is the same. While Maṇivācakar sings that the boat came to his rescue in the sea, the Āḻvār says that the boat or ship was itself sinking (5–1–9).

(e) Prayer : Maṇivācakar gives us a beautiful imagery when he prays to the Lord to receive him, crying that there is no refuge but He. "O Lord! to gether with both my hands your grace and try to swallow it in a single gulf. Alas! Just at this moment I get hiccups. It is indeed, a stroke of misfortune. Thou shalt remove this obstacle![96]" so prays Maṇivācaka. He indicates therein that it is the duty of the Lord to put an end to his trouble.

The Āḷvār employs the same phrases. But the manner differs. He says, if only, he saw God, he will gather him up and devour Him. But the Lord had stolen a march over the Āḷvār. He had anticipated the Āḷvār's move and forestalled it by devouring the Āḷvār (9–6–10).

2. When the Lord is slow to respond to his prayers, Maṇivācakar appeals pitiously:

"Thou, O Lord! received and saved me though I had no worth. Has that grace been withdrawn now? What do you lose if you view my short-comings sympathetically? show me consideration![97] The Āḷvār has a similar sentiment. The Lord once saved the cattle and the shepherds from the torrential rain by lifting the Hill with his little finger as a covering umbrella. Where has that grace gone now? Wonders the Āḷvār, seeing that the Lord is not responding to his prayers (9–4–3). Either the Lord's grace has diminished or the Āḷvār alone has been denied it says the Āḷvār. Both these senses are suggested.

3. Maṇivācakar gives expression to his desire as follows: "O Lord! I wanted with my whole being to see the smile on your radiant face. Draw me unto you?"

"*Mukavoḷi* ṉōkki *muṟuval* ṉakaikāṇa
attā cāla ācaippaṭ ṭēn"[98]

The Āḷvār, too, in the mode of the Lord's beloved spouse, tells Him that it was improper to have destroyed the sandhouses built by her (him) and that, having done that, he could right the wrong by coming before her (him) in his resplendent smile and share the delicacies. But why is He not doing this?

"Ninmukavoḷi tikaḷa muṟuval ceytu ṉinṟilaiyē"
(6–2–9).

4. Maṇivācakar withers in anguish at the thought that he was not able to give anything to the Lord in return for the endless grace with which the Lord entered him and spread ecstatic bliss throughout his frame.

"eṉtaiyē īcā uṭalitaṅ koṇṭāy
yān itaṟkilan ōr kaimmāṟē."[99]

The Āḻvār's pain is no less at the thought that he had nothing to offer to the Lord in gratefulness for the supreme act of grace with which the Lord made him worthy of His grace. He accepted even the useless dunce such as he (5-7-3). The Lord offered His lotus feet which are both the means and the goal. But the Āḻvār at least has one thing to give. That is his very life. He places it at the altar of the Lord to shape it as he likes. But he realises that this life is already the property of the Lord,

'unakku ōr kaimmāṟu ṉāṉ oṉṟilēṉ'[100] (5-7-10)

(f) Some More Similarities:

*Why Eulogy?* Maṇivācakar says that the Dēvas praise the Lord for the purpose of offering them a prosperous life.[101] The Āḻvār says that he praised the Lord with the intention of getting salvation for Himself (4-3-10).

*Why Worship?* The privilege of worshipping the Lord is not accorded to every one. Even for that His grace is necessary. As Maṇivācakar puts it:

"avan aruḷālē avan tāḷ Vaṇaṅki" (Civapurāṇam - 18)

The Āḻvār says:

"avanatu aruḷāl uṟaṟporuṭṭu en
uṇarvi nuḷḷē iruttinēṉ, atuvum avanatu innaruḷē"
(8-8-3):

*Manner of worship*: That worship largely consisted of the offer of flowers is made evident in the hymns of both

the saints, because both curse themselves that they are not worshipping the Lord with flowers :

"Panmalar paṟittēttēn" (Maṇivācakar aticayappattu5)
"Kālaṉtōṟum pūppaṟittēttakillēn' (4-7-9).

*The Goal of Worship*: Both the poet-saints are agreed as to the happy result of the Divine worship. The prize is Lord's own feet! They will be placed ever on one's head. That will be an indescribable joy!

"Cōtiyān tūyamāmalarc cēvaṭikkaṉ ṉamcenni mannic cuṭarum'' (Tiruvācakam cennippattu - 1)
"Ṉiṭṭalum viṇṇappam ceytāl iṟaivankaḷal annōn cenni porum" (1-9-11).

(g) Certain similarities in words and phrases :

| | *Tiruvācakam* | *Tiruvāymoḷi* |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Kaṟaṉta pāl (Civa-purāṇam) | (8-1-7), (8-5-10). |
| 2. | Kiṟṟilēn kiṟpan uṇṇavē (Tiruccatakam-5). | Kiṟpan kilēn enāilēn (3-2-6). |
| 3. | Tennā tenā enṟu teḷḷēṇam koṭṭāmē (Teḷḷēṇam 9,19). | Tennā Tenā ena Vaṇṭumural (3-9-1). |
| 4. | Kūvikkoḷḷāy (ācaippattu2 ). | (10-10-3). |
| 5. | aṟu camayam paṇivakai ceytu (Tiruvārttai -3). | Paraman paṇitta Paṇivakai (10-4-9). |
| 6. | āvā enāaruḷāyē (eṇṇappatikam - 6) | Aṭyērku āvā ennāyē (6-10-3). |
| 7. | aṟaiyō (Tiruveṇpā 5) | (5-1-1) |
| 8. | Toḻuteḻutal (Pōṟṟittiruvakaval 1) | (1-1-1) |
| 9. | Piṇakki, iṇakki, Uṇakki and Kaṇakkil (Tirukkaḷuk-kunṟappatikam 1) | Piṇakki, kaṇakkil, iṇakki and Uṇakki (6-2-8) |

The similarities described and exemplified in the foregoing pages have two fold aim. One is to show that the Āḻvār's poetry toes the line of the classical and mediaeval poets. His knowledge of Tamil literature was as broad as it was deep. The other is to show that in the Tamil country, at the time of the Āḻvār, there flowed a religious renaissance. Sharing fully, in that great movement, he eventually led the religious forces of that time, giving them shape and a direction. This is to a certain extent evident from the similarities to be observed between His poetry and that of other contemporaries.

Among the moralistic poems, the Kuṟaḷ leads. It expounds the secrets of moral order, the material welfare and happiness. It was shown in these pages how the Tiruvāymoḻi compares well with the Kuṟaḷ in this matter. In the early phases of the devotional movement, the religious fervour and the longing of the human heart for union with God are to be expected. The Āḻvār had another dimension added to this in his poems. He never missed a chance to elucidate or incorporate philosophical concepts cenveying the nature of truth, the nature of God, man and the world in which he lives. From the similarities observable in the songs of Vaḷḷuvar, Tirumūlar, (Appar), Suṉtarar, and Maṇivācakar, one can easily understand and appreciate the Āḻvār's unique place among the poets and philosophers of his time.

The intention of this writer is certainly not to show that either the Āḻvār followed and copied the method of others or that the others did so. Rather the intention is just the opposite. Some of the similarities noticed between his compositions and those of his contemporaries as well as those that just preceded him may cause some surprise. Among the works of the period in which the Āḻvār

flourished, there is a great measure of similarity and closeness. But it is difficult to decide who borrowed from whom. Rather than dogmatise and assert that X borrowed from Y, it would be well to accept, what one impartial critic has said namely rhat "there is nothing surprising in noticing many a common feature among contemporary writers–in respect of structure of the songs, musical tonality, the literary style and special musical modes. Such qualities are the very air they breathe at the time[109]", It is not a question of superiority or inferiority of one poet over others. The poetic excellence is best left to one's aesthetic sensibilities.

Another result of this part of the work is the highlighting of the similarities of approach to religious problems. These similarities help us recognize the Āḻvār's Tamil heart. It would appear that in the Āḻvār's time, there was an irrepressible urge to express every idea in Tamil. That was why every one of that time derived great satisfaction in anything being in Tamil. The Āḻvār has rendered great service in conveying the mysteries of the vedas in plain and flowing Tamil. This earns for him a true greatness. Gautama, the Buddha got enlightenment after having come of age. But the Āḻvār was the seat of wisdom even when he was a child: ("ñānac ciṟukuḻāvi"). Like Saṅkara who established the Advaitha Philosophy throughout the length and breadth of this country, the Āḻvār established his Vaiṣṇva doctrines through his divine poetry. He is: "Niṟai ñānattoru mūrtti". He is easily the prince among the poets of his time by virtue of the exquisite expression of philosophical truths and devotional sentiments in a poetry that remains unequalled. This will be apparent to anyone who reads his poems with discernment.

# CONCLUSION

This study of Nammāḻvār's Tiruvāymoḻi be concluded with a brief note on the objective the author proposed to himself in the beginning and the limits and limitations of investigations such an objective has entailed for him.

It is a vexed question whether the form of a poem can be considered without reference to the content. And yet the enquiry involved an exclusive study of the 'poetry' of Tiruvāymoḻi. The author has attempted to keep this objective in view throughout confining himself to a study of the style and stylistics of the text (or what may be called a close reading of the passages) as for as possible. If, occasionally, references to tha subject are brought in it is because the diction and versification have to be studied in relation to the sublime theme. In mystical poetry the problem is a little complicated when the infinite is sought to be expressed in terms of the finite – the way the 'finite' is exploited by the poet to express the infinite – has to be presented.

In relating Nammāḻvār again to the tradition → the departures had to be explained in terms of the subject matter. This also explains the apparent 'repetitions'. But they are there only if they cannot be helped.

It is hoped that this study would provoker similar studies of the works of other poets oi Bhakti cult in Tamil literature. For those who composed devotional poems in Tamil as will be seen in this dissertation, were not only proficient in spiritual matters but were great poets as well; and so it may as well be that a responce to their poetry will lead us to a surer realisation than a mere knowledge of their philosophy.

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19. Kaṇṇi Nuṇciṟuttāmpu - Maturakavi Āḻvār - Tanian and Verses 8 and 9.
20. Paripāṭal - Verse-2, Line 75.
21. Tiruvāymoḷi (5-2-2) and (10-1-7) and (3-3-1) and (10-9).
22. Paripāṭal - Verse 3, Line 2.
23. Tiruvāymoḷi (5-8-7) Vide, also (6-3-7), (7-10-5), (10-4-9) and (10-6-1).
24. Paripāṭal - Verse 3, Lines 63 to 68.
25. Paripāṭal - Verse 3, Lines 72 to 80.
26. Paripāṭal - Verse 3, Lines 77 to 80.
27. Paripāṭal - Verse 4, Line 56.
28. Paripāṭal - Verse 4, Line 70.
29. Paripāṭal - Verse 13, Lines 7 to 9.
30. Cilappatikāram - Lines 11-43 to 51.
31. Kamparāmāyaṇam Avatāram - V. 13.
32. Paripāṭal 13-50, 51.
33. Paripāṭal 13-63.
34. Paripāṭal 15-16 to 18.
35. Paripāṭal Line 34.
36. Paripāṭal 15-4 8.
37. Puṟanāṉūṟu 2-1 to 8.
38. Puṟanāṉūṟu - V. 49.
39. Kuṟuṉtokai - V. 110.

40. Kuruntokai - V. 3.

41. Kuruntokai - V. 344.

42. Kuruntokai - V. 200.

43. Kalittokai - V. 105, Lines 71, 72.

44. Tiruvāymoli (9-5-9).
Kalittokai - V. 120, Line 17.

45. Kalittokai - V. 146.

46. As quoted in Tiruvāymoli īṭṭin Tamiḻākkam - Vol. VI - B. R. Purutōtama Naidu, 1955 - p. 56, Footnote.

47. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1.

48. Tiruvāymoli (1-3-2, 6) and (1-2-2,5,8).

49. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 10.

50. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1199.

51. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1224.

52. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1228.

53. Tiruvāymoli (9-9-8, 10) and (10-3-5).

54. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1293.

55. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1133.

56. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 1122.

57. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 443 and 444.

58. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 388.

59. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 66.

60. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 62.

61. Tirukkuṟaḷ - V. 55.

62. Cilappatikāram - Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ, Kānalvari - 977.

63. Cilappatikāram - Kānalvari 2-77 to 80.
Tiruvāymoli (3-4).

64. Tirumantiram - K. M. Venkataramayya - Edition 1951 - Pāyiram - V. 67.

65. Tirumaṉtiram–Pāyiram – V. 68.

66. Tirumaṉtiram–Pāyiram – V. 77 and 73.

67. Tiruvāymoḻi (7-9-2) also (10-7-5) and (9-5-11).

68. Tirumaṉtiram – V. 81.

69. Tirumaṉtiram – V. 95.

70. Tirumaṉtiram – V. 2592.

71. Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam – Edition 1935 Appar – p. 334.

72. Tēvāram–Appar – p. 400.
Āḻvār–Verse (2-5-10).

73. Appar – p. 369, 315 and 397.
Āḻvār (6-3-9) and (2-3-2).

74. Appar – p. 10 (466) (384). Āḻvār (2-5-4).

75. Appar – p. 396.

76. 9th Century – Vide, K. Srinivasa Pillai's Tamil Varalāṟu, 1970, p. 76.
8th Century–Panniru Tirumuṟai Varalāṟu, I. K. Veḷḷaivāraṇar – p. 300-9.

77. Suṉtarar Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam Edition 1935 – p 215.

78. Āḻvār (9-10-1,2,3 and 4)

79. Suṉtarar Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam Edition 1935 – p 251.

80. Suṉtarar Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam Edition 1935 – p. 72

81. Āḻvār (7-3-1).

82. Suṉtarar Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam Edition 1935 – p. 187.

83. Āḻvār (3-5-1-) and (3-8).

84. Suṉtarar Tēvāram – S. S. Samājam Edition 1935 – p. 220.

85. Panniru Tirumuṟai Varalāṟu - Part I, p. 104.

86. Tiruvācakam Civapurāṇam - Pākanēri Tana Vaiciya iḷaiñar caṅka Publication, Line 67 and 69. – Tiruvāymoḻi (5-8-1).

87. Tiruccatakam - V. 35.

88. Ācaippattu – V. 3.

89. Tirupporcuṇṇam – V. 12.

90. Āna̲ntamālai – V. 3.

91. Tiruccatakam – V. 23, 29 and 40 (Tiru 2-3-5).

92. Uyiruṇṇippattu - V. 2.

93. Nīttal Viṇṇappam – V. 21.

94. Tiru. (4-3-10) and (8-4-11).

95. Tiruvācakam – Kaḻukkunṟam – V. 4.

96. Tiruvācakam – Aṭaikkalam – V. 10.

97. Tiruvācakam – Kuḻaittapattu – V. 3.

98. Ācaippattu - V. 6.

99. Kōyil patikam – V. 10.

100. Tiruvāymoḻi – Vide, (7-9-10) and (8-1-10).

101. Tiruvācakam Tiruccatakam 2-15-

102. The Story of Tamil Research – A. V. Subramania Ayyar, 1971 – p. 201.

### *Abbreviations used*

The numbers shown in brackets in the body of the thesis refer to the Tiruvāymoḻi Text, if it is not stated specifically. The first number refers to the major portion and the subsequent ones to smaller divisions or stanzas. In the reference section p–denotes page and V – verse and Su – Sūtra or Sūrṇai as the case may be. L stands for line.

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## APPENDIX - I

## KALI VIRUTTAMS - 24

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and commencing words of the Decad. | No. of 2 sylla-ble feet | No. of 3 sylla-ble feet | Exceptions and remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I (A) | Viḻam ending feet with Veṇ-taḷais. | 1) (4-2) 'Pālanāy | 133 | 43 | — |
| | ,, | 2) (6-6) 'Mālukku' | 133 | 43 | Last foot of each verse has 'mā' ending only. |
| | ,, | 3) (7-4) 'Āḻi eḻa' | 135 | 41 | -do- Deviations in connections - 5—3—3+4 and in feet pattern 6—4—2 and 10—3—3. |
| | ,, | 4) (7-9) 'Enṟaikkum' | 122 | 54 | — |
| | ,, | 5) (8-6) 'Elliyum' | 136 | 40 | Final feet of the verses are 'mā' ending except in verses 1, 2 and 10. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I (B) | Viḷam ending feet which do not possess veṇṭaḷais. | 6) (1–1) 'Uyar vaṟa' | 175 | 1 | Except the final foot in each verse all are Karuvḷiam feet. |
| | Vilam ending feet which do not possess veṇṭaḷais. | 7) (9-10) 'Mālai naṇṇi' | 162 | 14 | Deviations verse — Line — Foot<br>8 — 2 — 4<br>10 — 4 — 4<br>In eight places a short Vowel or a Vowel consonant forms a separate syllable in the initial position of a foot. |
| | ” | 8) (10-9) 'Cūḻvicumpu | 141 | 35 | 9 verses in this decad end with 'Mā' ending foot.. |
| Type II A | 3 Viḷam ending feet and a Kāy ending foot with veṇṭaḷais. | 9) (3-8) 'Muṭiyānē' | 118 | 58 | 'U' stands as a separate syllable in the initial position in some places. |
| | ” | 10) (8–7) 'Iruttum viyaṉtu' | 113 | 63 | In seven places the connection deviates. |
| | ” | 11) (9–6) 'Urukumāl' | 114 | 62 | — |
| | ” | 12) (10–4) 'Cārvē tava ṉeṟi' | 90 | 86 | If a 'mā' ending foot is followed by an initial niṟai foot the first one becomes equal to vilam ending foot. This rule is observed in this decad. There are a few 'mā' ending foot in the 4th series too. |

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and comencing words of the Decad. | No. of 2 sylla-ble feet | No. of 3 sylla-ble feet | Exceptions ank remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Type III | A. Mā, Viḷam Vilam and mā ending feet with Veṇtaḷais. | 13) (1-7) 'Piṟavit tuyaraṟa' | 156 | 20 | 1) The first and second feet connections of the first two lines of verses 5 and 6 are different.<br>2) The 4th feet of the later 6 verses are 'viḷam' instead of 'mā'. |
| | B) Mā, Viḷam, Vilam and mā ending feet which do not conform to Veṇtaḷais. | 14) (2-9) 'Emmā vīṭu' | 159 | 17 | Exceptions :<br>1) In the 4th feet series there are 7 viḷam ending feet and one Kāy ending foot instead of 'mā' endings.<br>2) 1—2—3, 1—4—2 } 'Viḷam' feet instead of 'mā'. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 15) (9-4) 'Maiyār Karuṅkaṇṇi' | 105 | 71 | In it there are a few 'Kani' ending feet and also a few Kali connection. |
| Type IV | A. Viḷam mā, viḷam and mā feet with veṇṭaḷais. | 16) (9-3) 'Orāyiramāy' | 164 | 12 | The latter portion of the decad contains viḷam ending feet in the 4th place instead of mā. Deviations in taḷai are found mostly in verses 4 and 5. |
| | B) Viḷam mā, viḷam and mā feet without conformity to taḷai | 17) (2-10) 'Kiḷaroḷi' | 160 | 16 | In II. 3.3 'uḷ' is an excess syllable; others are 3—4—4 and 4—1—4. |
| Type V. | A) 3 'mā' ending feet and the 4th kāy ending foot with Veṇtaḷais. | 18) (9-8) 'Aṟukkum vinai' | 110 | 66 | There are a few deviations in the veṇtaḷai. |
| Type VI | B) One 'mā' and 3 viḷam ending feet, | 19) (1-10) 'Perumā' | 133 | 43 | 6—2—4, 7—4—4, 10—3—4 } 'mā' ending feet instead of viḷam ending. |
| | | 20) (3-3) 'Oḻivil Kālam | 149 | 27 | 2—1—2, 2—1—3 } 'mā' ending feet instead of viḷam ending. |

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and commencing words of the Decad. | No. of 2 sylla-ble feet | No. of 3 sylla-ble feet | Exceptions and remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | | 21) (3-2) 'Munnīr ñālam' | 97 | 71 | 1) This contains eight Kani ending feet.<br><br>2) The 4th series contains more 'Kāy' than Viḷam.<br>8—4—4, 11—3—1 } Kāy instead of 'ma'<br>9—2—1, 9—4—1 } Viḷam instead of 'ma' |
| Type VII. | mā, kāy, mā and kāy ending feet | 22) (10-8) 'Tirumāli-ruñcōlai' | 96 | 80 | In 8th verse one Viḷam.<br>In 9th verse one Viḷam and 3 Kāy feet are there.<br>5—3—4 - mā<br>3—2—2, 3—2—4, 10—4—2 } Kani. 5—1—4, 8—3—4 } A syllable more. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Type VIII. | 23) (2–2) 'Tiṉṉam Viṭu' | — | — | These two decads do not conform to any regularity except to say the former possesses two syllable feet and the latter mainly three syllable feet. |
| | 24) (2–3) 'Ūnil vāḻ | — | — | |

APPENDIX - II

## III. KALIT TURAIS - 23

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and commencing words. | Two syllable feet. | Three syllable feet with Kay ending | Other Kani endings | Exceptions and Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| I. | 4 Viḷam and one Kāy ending feet conforming to one taḷai. | 1) (4-5) 'Viṟṟiruṉtu | 173 | 47 | — | V. I. f. 10—3—3 10—3—4 |
| | | 2) (5-9) 'MānēyNōkku' | 144 | 63 | 13 | 1) In the place of a 'Vilam' foot: mā foot will also stand provided it succeeds a foot with 'Nirai' in its initial position (or at times as its second syllable).<br><br>2) Instead of two Kūviḷam feet one 'mā' foot and another Kūviḷam foot may also stand and then become equalised in rhythm. These two accepted exception rules are found in viruttappāviyal. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3) (6-8) 'Ponnulaku' | 130 | 90 | — | 1) In this decad 10 occurrences in the series of 3rd feet, one occurrence in the series of 2nd feet and three occurrences in the series of 4th feet, there is a rare exception. i.e., in the beginning of the foot a short vowel or a vowel consonant stands as a separate syllable because it sounds different from its succeeding sounds or letters.<br><br>2) In the fifth feet series in a few places nasals or laterals also have to be ignored while analysing the pattern of feet, and<br><br>3) in a few cases one letter or mātra is found in excess. That has also to be ignored. The 2nd and 3rd exceptions have been pointed out in *Viruttappāviyal* also. |
| 4) (7-6) 'Pāmaru mūvulaku' | 134 | 86 | — | — |
| 5) (7-7) 'Ê̱laiya rāvi' | 138 | 82 | — | 6—1—5 'Kaḷ' is extra. |

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and commencing words. | Two syllable feet. | Three syllable feet with Kay ending. | Other Kani endinga | Exceptions and Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| II, | One mā and four viḷam ending feet conforming to one taḷai. | 6) (3-7) 'Payilum' | 166 | 54 | — | — |
| | | 7) (4-1) 'Oru nāyakam' | 163 | 57 | — | 1—2—2 and 3<br>1—3—2 and 3<br>1—4—2 and 3<br>3—3—2 and 3<br>6—3—2 and 3<br>5—2—2 and 3<br>6—2—2 and 3<br>} Exception in taḷais = 7. |
| | | 8) (5-1) 'Kaiyār Cakkaram' | 135 | 85 | — | 1) Mā + Kūviḷam = Veṇtaḷai<br>2) 3—2—2+3<br>4—1—3+4<br>4—4—3+4<br>9—3—1+2<br>} Exceptions in taḷais. |
| | | 9) (7-5) 'Kaṟpār' | 158 | 62 | — | 1—2—2<br>7—2—3<br>} 'mā' in place of Viḷam. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| III. | One Kāy followed by 4 Viḷam feet conforming to one taḷai | 10) (3–9) 'Connāl' | 150 | 70 | — | — |
| | | 11) (4–6) 'Tīrppārai' | 147 | 73 | — | The pattern of feet does not conform fully. 9—1—2 should be 'oru' instead of Or. |
| IV. | Four viḷam folḷowed by a mā foot without conformity to any taḷai. | 12) (1–3) 'Pattuṭai aṭiyavar' | 199 | 21 | — | — |
| V. | mā, viḷam, viḷam, viḷam and kāy : | 13) (6–3) 'Ṉalkuravum' | 151 | 69 | — | 1—1—2, 1—1—5, 1—2—5, 4—1—2, 5—1—2 } 'mā' for viḷam or Kay.<br>6—4—5, 10—4—5 } Kani.<br>11—2—5 = 4 syllable foot. |
| | | 14) (6–7) 'Uṉṉum Cōṟu' | 150+1 | 70 | — | V. I. f.<br>10—2—2 and in 3—2— one additional foot is found. |

| Type | Nature of pattern | No. and commencing words. | Two syllable feet. | Three syllable feet with Kay ending. | Other Kani endings | Exceptions and Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | | 15) (7-8) 'Māyā Vāmananē' | 146 | 74 | — | 1—2—1+2, 1—4—1+2, 10—2—1+2, 1—2—4+5, 6—4—1+2 } Exceptions in the connections. |
| | | 16) (10-10) 'Muniyē ṉānmukanē' | 133 | 77 | 10 | The first feet are either mā on Viḷam or Māṇkāy in this.<br>4—2—2, 5—4—2 } 'mā' feet instead of Viḷam' feet.<br>1—1—4, 7—1—4 } 'ma' feet instead of Viḷam.<br>9—1—2, 9—4—4 and 9—4—5 10—1—3, 10—3—3, 10—3—5 and 10—4—3.<br>In these feet a short vowel or a vowel consonant stands as a separate syllable in the initial position. A few more such syl- |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | lables are there in the 3rd feet series. In the fifth feet series there are a few Kani ending feet and also an extra letter or mātra. |
| VI. | 4 mā and one kāy ending feet. | 17) (6–9) 'Ṉīṟāy' | 180 | 40 | — | — |
| | | 18) (8–3) 'Aṅkumiṅ-kum' | 180 | 40 | — | In this third series of feet posses more viḷam than mā. |
| VII. | Mā, viḷam, viḷam viḷam and mā. | 19) (6–1) 'Vaikal Pūṅkaḷi' | 134 | 86 | — | v. I. f. 5—2—2 One Kaḷ extra. This decad contains more Kāy feet than viḷam. |
| | | 20) (10–1) 'Tāḷa tāmarai' | 190 | 30 | – | 4—4—4, 9—1—4 } mā instead of viḷam. |
| VIII. | Two viḷams, mā and two viḷams. | 21) (5–3) 'MācaṟuCōti' | 172 | 48 | — | 8—2—2 only. |
| | | 22) (9–5) 'Innuyirc Cēval' | 169 | 51 | — | 5—3—3 Viḷam For mā; 6—1—2, 8—3—1, 11—4—2 } 'mā' for 'Viḷam' |
| | | 23) (5–5) 'eṅṅanēyō' | 120 | 83 | Kani 17 | In this, there are a large number of three syllable feet and four syllable feet also. In the place of 'mā' even 'Kāy' appears. Eleventh verse has many deviations. |

APPENDIX - III

## IV. ĀCIRIYA VIRUTTAMS WITH 6 FEET LINES - 22

| Type | Nature of pattern | Number and commencing words of the Decad | Exceptions and other Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1. | mā, mā, kāy and its repetition. | 1) (1-5) 'Vaḷa Vēḷ' | — |
| | | 2) (4-3) 'Kōvai Vāyāḷ' | Verse - Line - Foot<br>4 - 2 - 5 One syllable foot instead of mā<br>5 - 3 - 3 ,, ,, Kāy<br>5 - 4 - 5 Viḷam in the place of mā. |
| | | 3) (6-10) 'Ulakam Uṉṭa' | — |
| | | 4) (8-5) 'Māyakkūttā' | 1) At the end of the decad 'e' is found extra<br>2) Viḷam and Viḷam kāy are considered as on equal footing. |
| | | 5) (8-8) 'Kaṉkaḷ Civantu | — |
| | | 6) (8-10) 'Neṭumāṟkaṭimai' | 6—4—6 'mā' instead of viḷam foot. |
| | | 7) (10-7) 'Ceñ Col' | — |
| 2. | Viḷam, mā, tēmā and its repetition | 8) (3-4) 'Pukaḻu ṉal' | 11—4—3 Rukūr has to be taken as Tēmā. |
| | | 9) (10-2) 'Keṭumiṭar' | 11—3—5 The reading should be amarar, and not amar. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 3—2—3 and 5 other places in the 6th feet series 'Puram' stands for mā ending feet. |
| 3. Five 'mā' feet followed by Kāy foot. | 10) (5-8) 'Ārāvamutē' | 3—1—5 Viḷam instead of mā' |
| 4. Viḷam, Viḷam, tēma (mainly) and its repetition. | 11) (4-4) 'Maṇṇai Iruṉtu' | 11—1—3 a monosyllable foot.<br>8—4—6 ē is extra here. |
| 5. mā or viḷam, viḷam, ma viḷam, viḷam and m̄a | 12) (3-5) 'Moymām' | 3—4—5+6<br>10—4—5+6 The last two feet stand changed in their position. |
| | 13) (5-2) 'Polika Polika' | 2—1—2<br>7—2—4 mā instead of viḷam. |
| 6. mā, tēmā, temā, tēma Kūviḷam and Kāy ending feet. | 14) (4-7) 'Cīla millā' | 5—1—2<br>11—2—3 mā instead of viḷam. There are six monosyllable feet in this. |
| | 15) (9-1) 'Koṇṭa Peṇṭir' | This contains a few Kani ending feet, a few four syllable feet and one monosyllable foot. 11—3—3 either 'Kaḷ' or 'ivai' is extra. |
| 7. mā, viḷam, mā, Kūviḷam, viḷam and kāy ending feet | 16) (6-4) 'Kuravai āycciyar' | A few line endings have kani feet or a letter or a syllable excess. Third line of the fourth verse seems to be defective. |

| Type | Nature of pattern | Number and commencing words of the Decad | Exceptions and other Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | 17) (4-10) 'Onṟum tēvūm' | In the third feet series mā and viḷam feet are mixed. Other deviations are<br>1—2—3, 5—2—3, 10—4—3 } Viḷam for mā.<br>2—1—2, 6—1—2, 7—1—2, 8—1—4 } mā for viḷām. |
| | | 18) (8-9) 'Karu māṇikka' | At the end of lines 'Kani' feet are found or a letter or a sYllable is excess in a few cases. Third line of the fourth verse seems to be defective. |
| 8. | Conforms to Veṇtaḷai and no pattern of feet. | 19) (3-10) 'Canmam' | In seven places in the initial stage of a foot, a short vowel or a vowel consonant stands as a syllable representing 'nēr'. |
| | | 20) (7-10) 'Inpampayakka' | 6—1—6 and 11—2—6 : Feet with 4 syllables. In the 6th feet series there are a few 'Kani' ending feet. |
| | | 21) (1-9) 'Ivaiyum' | Between 3rd and 4th feet no Veṇtaḷai.<br>6—1—2+3, 9—1—1+2 Other exceptions. |
| 9. | Does not fit in with any regular pattern. | 22) (2-7) 'Kēcavan tamar' | In 2 syllable feet 267, 3 syllable feet 44 and monosyllable one. |

APPENDIX – IV

## V. ĀCIRIYA VIRUTTAMS WITH SEVEN FEET LINES – 6

| Type | Nature of patterns | Number and commencing words of the decad | Exceptions and other remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| I. | Viḷam, mā, viḷam, mā Viḷam, viḷam and mā ending feet. | 1) (7–2) 'Kaṅkulum' | — |
| | | 2) (8–1) 'Tēvi mārāvār' | 1) In the 11th verse, the words in first two lines have to be segmented largely to keep up pattern of feet.<br>2) 10–4–6 and 10–4–7 and interchanged. |
| | | 3) (8–4) 'Vārkaṭā aruvi' | 10–1–1+2 9–4–6+7 pattern of feet changed.<br>6–1–3 6–3–5 mā for viḷam. |
| | | 4) (9–2) 'Paṇṭai ṉāḷālē' | — |
| II. | mā, viḷam, tēmā, viḷam, tēmā, viḷam | 5) (6–5) 'Tuvaḷil māmaṇi' | 'mā' ending that follows 'nirai' is taken as viḷam ending. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| and viḷam ending feet. | 1-1-6<br>8-1-6<br>8-3-4 | 'mā' for viḷam. |
| | If followed niṟai initial foot then the preceeding foot is taken as viḷam foot. | |
| 6) (3-6) 'Ceyya tāmaral' | 11 places in the second, fourth and sixth series of feet, a short vowel, or a vowel consonant has been considered as a syllable 'nēr' in the initial position. | |
| | 10-2-2<br>7-3-2<br>9-3-6<br>9-4-4<br>6-1-6 | Short vowel consonants in these in the initial position have been taken as separate syllables. |
| | 1-2-4<br>5-2-6 | 'mā' for viḷām. |
| | Other deviations are : | |
| | 3-4-6<br>8-1-5<br>9-2-5 | mā instead of viḷam. |
| | 7-1-7 | Kāy instead of 'mā'. |
| | 3-8-8<br>10-4-8 | One syllable instead of 'mā'. |

| Type | Nature of patterns | Number and commencing word, of the decad | Exceptions and other remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | | 4) (9–9) 'mallikai Kamaḷ' | 6–1–4<br>11–4–8 These two are monosyllable feet |
| | | | OR |
| | | | 6–1–2<br>11–4–7 These two are 'mā' ending feet. |
| | | | Anyhow one defect stands. |
| | | 5) (10–3) 'Vēy maru' | 7–3–2<br>11-2–2 'mā' for viḷam. |
| | | | 10–2–2<br>6–1–4<br>5-4–8<br>8–2–8 } One syllable for 'mā'. |
| | | | 5–3–7 – Viḷam instead of 'mā'. |

APPENDIX - V

## VI. ĀCIRIYA VIRUTTAMS WITH EIGHT FEET LINES - (5)

| Type | Definition or nature of pattern. | Number and commencing words of the Decad. | Exceptions and other remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| I. | Kāy, kāy, mā and mā and its repetition. | 1) (5-6) 'Kaṭal ñālam' | In place of 'Kāy' ending feet in a few cases viḷam ending feet occur. A few Kani' ending feet and four syllable feet also are there. |
| | | | 3-2-2, 3-2-6, 5-1-2, 6-2-1 } 4 syllable feet |
| | | | 5-2-6 - Māṉkāy for 'mā'. |
| | | | 3-4-8, 11-1-3 Viḷam for 'mā' |
| | | | In verses 4th and 8th series of feet there are 15 'Nirai' One syllable feet. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| II. In place of Kāy feet a number of viḷam feet occur. | 2) (7–3) 'Veḷḷai Curicaṅku' | In many places, 'mā' feet get the status of viḷam feet on the basis of the exception rule. |
| | | 8–2–3 – Viḷam for 'mā'. |
| | | 1–4–4, 9–4–4 'nirai' for 'mā' |
| | | 6–1–8, 6–2–4, 8–3–4, 8–3–8 } One syllable less in these four feet. |
| | 3) (8–2) 'Naṅkaḷ varivaḷai' | In many places 'mā' feet get the status of viḷam feet on the basis of the exception: In addition to the exception rules stated earlier, one more new aspect is found here. If Puḷimā is followed by a feet with 'nēr' in its initial position then the preceeding one also is considered as equal to viḷam ending foot. |

APPENDIX - VI

## VI. ĀCIRIYAT TURAIS - (5)

| Type | Nature of pattern of feet | Nnmber and commencing words of the Decad. | Two sylable feet. | Three syllable feet. | Exceptions and Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| I | 1 and 3rd lines 7 feet<br>2 and 4th fines 5 feet | 1) (2-6) 'Vaikuṉta' | 216 | 48 | |
| | | 2) (4-7) 'Nōṟṟa nonpilār' | 225 | 39 | |
| | | 3) (7-1) 'Uṇṇilā' | 232 | 31 | |
| | | 4) (6-2) 'Minniṭai' | 212 | 52 | |
| II. | mā, Viḷam, Viḷam, mā viḷam, Viḷam and Kūviḷam feet. | 5) (7-1) 'Piṟantavāṟum' | | | In this decad the first 6 verses contain 8 feet in their 1st and 3td lines and 6 feet in 2nd and 4th lines respectively. |

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...Nammalvar, the mystic-seer, the God-lover, the seraphic saint, was also a supreme poet, and it is the poet–the poet in excelsis - that is Dr. Damodaran's principal preoccupation in the present work.

Dr. Damodaran deserves to be congratulated on his completing conscientiously so meritorious a research project. Here industry teams with sensitivity, and scholarship with a feeling for literary values; and not the least of the merits of this excellent study is its constant feat of referring the reader back to Nammalvar and to his imperishable spiritual and poetic heritage, *Tiruvaymoli*.

*Dr. K. R. S.*

...I appreciate and admire your silent, sincere, serious, marvellous and monumental services to our language through the publication of the treatise on Nammalvar's literary as well as religious excellence. Thank you for the chance you gave me to go through the pages with a sense of delight and also getting new knowledge.

*Dr. S. N. K.*